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ABSTRACT

Charter schools are public schools created through a business-like contract, or "charter," with the sponsoring school board. Although the process is somewhat standardized, each state's schools are unique. Ways in which charter schools are operating in one state, Wisconsin, are detailed in this volume. The text represents the most complete and informative description of charter schools in the state and features case profiles of 13 charter schools. It explores the history of charter schools in Wisconsin, what charter schools can and cannot do, their organization and governance, teaching requirements, funding, and accountability. Case study profiles, which consist mostly of middle schools and high schools, feature the address of each school, along with a phone number, a profile of academic efforts, and a table of enrollment information. Some of the themes in these schools include alternative education, accelerated learning, and various thematic emphases. A comparison of charter schools, paying special attention to curriculum, instructional programs, methods of assessment, staffing, schedules, populations and locations, and administrative information is also included. (RJM)

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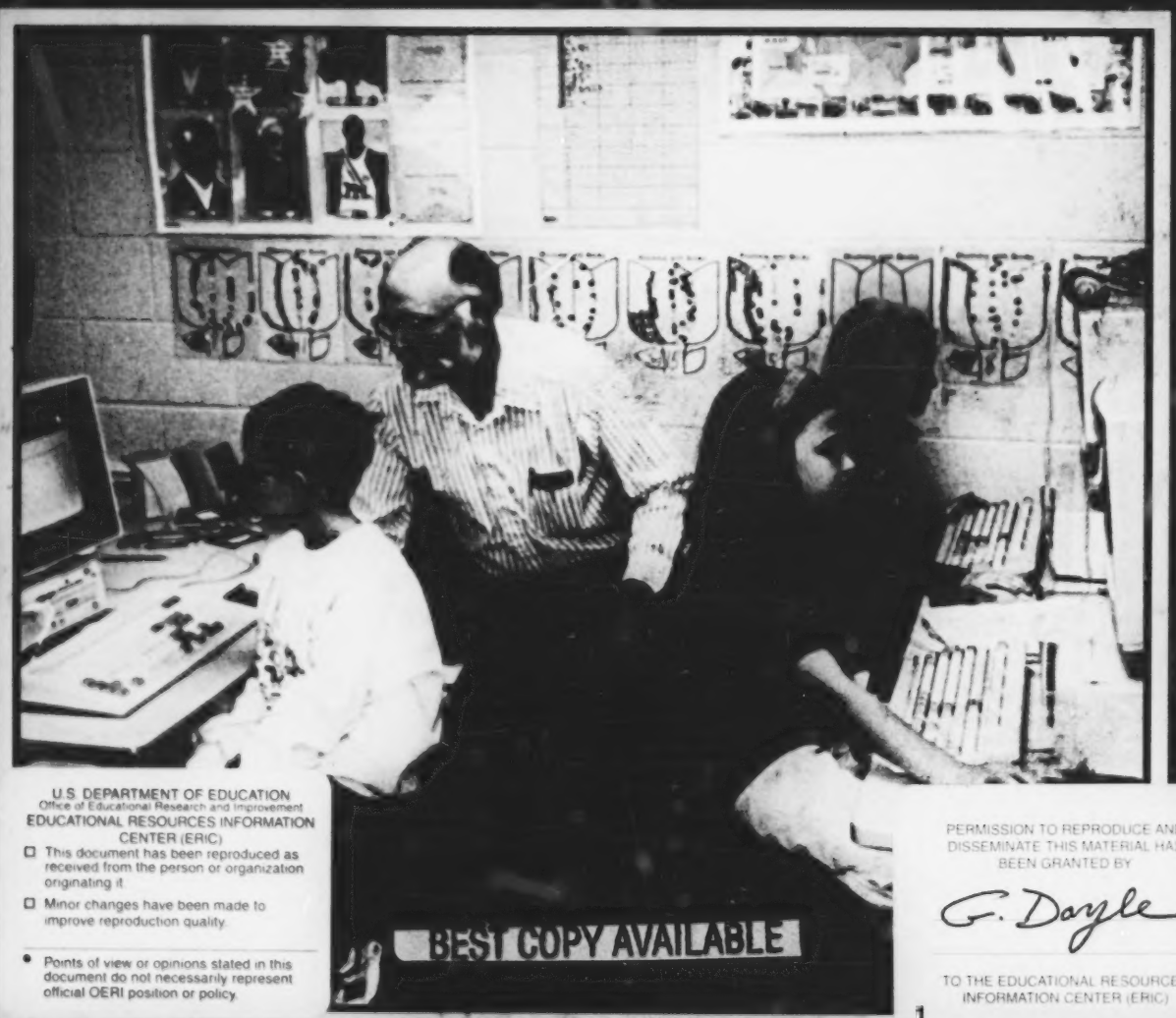

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# Wisconsin Charter Schools

# 1996-97

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# *Foreword*

This document represents the most complete and informative description of charter schools in Wisconsin. I am pleased to make it available to all interested persons throughout the state and the nation. I hope it will help readers understand the concept of charter schools as they exist in Wisconsin and will provide useful information regarding the charter schools now in operation.

I especially want to recognize the leadership and dedication of the citizens, teachers, administrators, and school boards who have taken the initiative to establish a charter school in their community. These schools offer opportunities for new models of curriculum, instruction, student assessment, and school governance to be tried and evaluated at the local district level. Through such efforts, the quality public school systems in Wisconsin will be strengthened and improved. Parent and community participation in the schools will increase and will play an ever more important role in the education of our children.

I also want to recognize the financial support provided to Wisconsin's charter school program by the U.S. Department of Education. This assistance has strengthened existing charter schools in the state, provided funding for charter school planning projects throughout Wisconsin, and made this study and its publication possible.

John T. Benson
State Superintendent

# *Introduction*

Charter schools are public schools created through a businesslike contract, or "charter," with the sponsoring school board. The Wisconsin Charter School Law (Section 118.40) gives charter schools freedom from most of the state's requirements regarding public education and thereby the freedom to be creative in the areas of curriculum, instructional methods, teaching resources, student evaluations, and charter school governance structures. In a regular public school, these areas are much more rigid. The charter defines the missions and methods of the charter school; the school board then holds the school accountable to its charter.

Wisconsin established charter schools to foster an environment of creativity. Charter schools are, in essence, "living laboratories" that influence the larger public school system and introduce an element of competition within that system. Charter schools are created with the best elements of regular public schools in mind. Charter school leaders may experiment with different instructional theories, site-based management techniques, etc. They learn, sometimes by trial and error, what works best for their student population. Regular schools can observe and learn from what happens in the charter school and make similar improvements without having to experience "growing pains." Through this process, the entire public school system is continually challenged to improve itself.

Wisconsin also wants each charter school to meet the special needs and interests of its community, parents, and students. This is what makes each charter school unique. While many goals for educating and preparing children are similar, each charter school fulfills a specific local need in education. Some charter schools offer a choice to parents and students in the area of curriculum, teaching methodology, and classroom structure. Others work feverishly to keep that small population of at-risk students from falling through the cracks with counseling and lots of personal attention and support. In the districts with charter schools, the community, school boards, and parents have identified their needs and wants for public education and established charters that meet these.

# Wisconsin Charter Schools State Summary 1

*History*

*Sponsorship*

*Legal Status*

*What Charter Schools Can and Cannot Do*

*Organization and Governance*

*Teaching Requirements*

*Funding*

*Accountability*

## History

Wisconsin's charter school program was established in 1993 to encourage innovation in school organization and instruction. Governor Tommy Thompson received bipartisan support to pass the initiative, authorizing ten districts to establish 20 charter schools.

In 1995, revisions to the initial Charter School Law (see Appendix A) lifted the cap on the number of school districts permitted to establish charter schools. During the 1996-97 school year, 13 charter schools operated in 11 Wisconsin districts. Additionally, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) awarded 13 planning grants in January 1997 to school districts to help them explore the possibility of better serving their students by establishing charter schools.

## Sponsorship

Only district school boards can create charter schools in Wisconsin. However, each school board can establish an unlimited number of charter schools within its district. The school board reviews petitions submitted to establish charter schools and reserves complete discretion in granting or denying the petition. The school board's only legal requirement is that when choosing from competing petitions, it gives preference to the applicant that would establish a charter school to serve the at-risk student population. There is no state appeals process for denied petitions, except in Milwaukee, where denied petitions can be appealed to the DPI.

Legislation is pending to expand the base of sponsorship for charter schools in Wisconsin. If the governor signs 1997 legislation amending Wisconsin's charter school law, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Area Technical College, and the city of Milwaukee could sponsor charter schools.

## Legal Status

Legally, each charter school in Wisconsin is an instrumentality or subsidiary of the district school board that creates it. The school board employs charter school staff and remains responsible for workers compensation, insurance benefits, unemployment compensation, and liability for acts by charter school staff.

Wisconsin's charter school law contains special provisions that apply only to the Milwaukee Public School District. For instance, a charter school cannot be the instrumentality of a Milwaukee district school board. This exception has led to some very different and innovative characteristics in the administrative structure and curriculum of Milwaukee's Highland Community School. Charter schools in Milwaukee can hire and fire personnel without having to negotiate with the teachers union or the school district's administration. Other provisions include the ability to convert private, nonsectarian schools to charter schools and to appeal denied charter petitions to the state.

Wisconsin planned this purposefully, making Milwaukee a charter school testing ground before extending such principles throughout the state. Legislative changes proposed to the charter school law in 1997 would extend many of the provisions reserved for Milwaukee statewide. For a complete list of 1997 proposed legislative changes to Wisconsin's charter school law, see Appendix B.

## What Charter Schools Can and Cannot Do

Charter schools in Wisconsin are exempt from most state requirements regarding public K-12 education. However, they must meet four state requirements. First, teachers must be licensed by the DPI. Second, charter schools must participate in the Wisconsin Student Assessment System; this includes administering the third-grade reading comprehension test and the Knowledge and Concepts Examinations, a battery of standardized tests given in fourth, eighth, and tenth grades covering the subjects of reading, math, science, language arts, and social studies. Third, charter schools must participate in the annual school performance report produced by the DPI. And fourth, students must be counted for membership of the local school district. Charter schools are not exempt from federal laws governing education or civil rights policies, nor are they exempt from local school board policies unless negotiated in the district contract.

A charter school cannot charge tuition and must be equally accessible to all students in the district. Preference in admission must be given to students living within the attendance area of an existing school that is converted to a charter school. Non-resident students may be admitted to charter schools under tuition arrangements with other districts if the receiving district school board wishes to do so.

A charter school cannot discriminate on the basis of a person's sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability. The charter contract must describe how the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that reflects the school district population.

Attendance at a charter school must be voluntary. The district must provide alternative public education for pupils who do not wish to attend the charter school or who are not admitted to the charter school.

Charter schools can be completely new schools or conversions from previously public schools, but cannot be conversions from private schools. Again, this statutory provision has an exception for Milwaukee, where private nonsectarian schools may convert to charter status. Highland Community School is an example of that conversion.

Health and safety requirements apply to charter schools as to all of Wisconsin's public schools.

## *Organization and Governance*

Charter schools are free to be creative in setting up their governance and administrative structures. Many break from traditional school administration by establishing decision-making boards that include some or all of a school's teachers. Others have parent and teacher committees to address school needs, such as fund-raising and the budget. Still others include student representatives in their governing bodies. In Milwaukee's Highland Community School, parents are required by contract to volunteer 36 hours each per year, either in running the school or in student classrooms and activities. In many of the "school within a school" charters, the administrative structures are quite similar to traditional public school administrations because district administrative services are shared.

## *Teaching Requirements*

Generally, DPI licenses teachers in specific subject areas and grade levels. To give charter schools more flexibility in their staffing, DPI has created a charter school teaching license that allows licensed teachers to teach out of their primary subject areas and grade levels. Charter schools can also employ other professionals who are not trained as instructors using this DPI-issued charter school teaching permit. Requirements for the charter school teaching permit include having a bachelor's degree in the subject area to be taught or in a related field and six credits per year of continuing education in the field being taught. A permit holder may be exempt from the requirement for continuing education if he/she holds a terminal degree in his/her field and is a full-time employee of an approved teacher preparation institution in Wisconsin, or has formal proof of mastery in a trade. However, this individual must work under the direction of a person who is licensed by DPI to teach the subject or trade.

The district administrator may request that a charter school teaching permit be granted to any individual hired to perform instructional duties if a search for a qualified, licensed individual is unsuccessful. The charter school teaching permit is valid for one year, with renewal possible if six credits are completed by the applicant in an approved teacher education program. For information on teaching requirements, refer to the Wisconsin Administrative Code in Appendix C.

Teachers, whether in regular public schools or in charter schools, may be members of the teachers union covered by the master contract and pay schedule. A 1995 statutory change allows charter school instructional staff members to establish a separate collective bargaining unit if a majority wish to do so. An exception applies to Milwaukee, where teachers and administrators may be hired and fired without having to negotiate with the union. The 1997 proposed amendment to Wisconsin's charter school law may protect the Milwaukee teachers from losing tenure and participatory rights in the Wisconsin Retirement System.

## *Funding*

To understand how charter schools are funded, a short description of public school finance is appropriate. Approximately two-thirds of the public K-12 school system's money in Wisconsin comes from state aid, tax dollars allocated by the state to fund public education. The remaining one-third comes from other sources, including local property taxes, federal funds, and local fees. In wealthier districts, the state may provide little of the schools' money. This is done in an attempt to equalize the educational opportunities for students in both

wealthy and not-so-wealthy school districts in Wisconsin, as measured by property value.

Charter schools, too, receive state and local dollars, but the contract negotiated with the local school board determines the amount. In some cases, the district's per-pupil expenditure follows the student as he or she moves from a regular public school to a charter school. In some cases, the charter schools function with less money. This is made possible by sharing administrative costs, by locating the school within the existing public school facility, and by participating in services the district contributes, such as transportation, athletics, and food services.

Several charter schools have received grants and gifts from community organizations, businesses and private contributors.

Federal grants also help support Wisconsin's charter schools. The U.S. Department of Education approved Wisconsin's request for federal charter school funding for three years. Wisconsin received $825,000 in federal aid in October 1996 and expects to receive the second year's allocation of $825,000 in October 1997.

Of the federal funds received in 1996, DPI allocated $525,113 (64 percent) in 12 initial implementation grants to strengthen or expand existing charter schools. (See Table 1.) DPI allocated another $258,637 (31 percent) in 13 planning grants to ten districts to study potential charter schools. (See Table 2.) Applications for planning grants could not exceed $25,000 each. State Superintendent John T. Benson noted that planning grants allow recipients to explore the possibility of a charter school without requiring a commitment to establish one. (See Appendix D for a list of planning grant recipients and descriptions of their proposed programs.) DPI reserved the remaining 5 percent ($41,250) of the federal grant for the administration and review of the grant applications, for a descriptive study on charter schools operating in the state, and to provide information, materials, and technical assistance in support of the charter school program in Wisconsin.

The U.S. Department of Education notified Wisconsin on June 2, 1997, that an additional $500,000 in supplemental grant award funds would be allocated to Wisconsin's charter school program. The funds can be used through the end of 1998. Of this supplemental grant, approximately 38 percent ($190,040) was allocated to the 12 existing charter schools who applied for federal grants awarded in January 1997, but whose requests were not fully funded. The 12 charter

Table 1

## 1997 Federal Grants Awarded to Wisconsin Charter Schools

Through the federal charter school program, 12 Wisconsin charter schools received a total of $715,153.

| Charter School | Amount Requested | Amount Awarded in January 1996 | Additional Amount Awarded in June 1996 | Total Award |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appleton Central Alternative School | $68,703 | $19,700 | $13,559 | $33,259 |
| Beaver Dam Charter School | $89,000 | $43,000 | $27,279 | $70,279 |
| Deerfield Alternative High School | $25,460 | $23,680 | $1,780 | $25,460 |
| McKinley Charter School, Eau Claire | $67,000 | $60,300 | $6,700 | $67,000 |
| School of Technology and Arts (SOTA), La Crosse | $114,954 | $46,704 | $30,184 | $76,888 |
| Ladysmith Evening Alternative School | $78,250 | $35,715 | $23,924 | $59,639 |
| Affiliated Alternatives, Madison | $75,252 | $75,252 | $0 | $75,252 |
| Middleton Alternative High School | $74,540 | $37,270 | $24,050 | $61,320 |
| Highland Community School, Milwaukee | $78,880 | $70,992 | $7,888 | $78,880 |
| T.E.A.M.S., Stevens Point | $49,500 | $41,500 | $8,000 | $49,500 |
| New Century School, Verona | $119,070 | $24,700 | $16,814 | $41,514 |
| Verona Core Knowledge Charter School | $161,600 | $46,300 | $29,862 | $76,162 |
| **Total** | **$1,002,209** | **$525,113** | **$190,040** | **$715,153** |

schools received supplements in the same proportions as they received in the January awards, up to the point that their request was fully funded. (See Table 1.)

DPI awarded 57 percent of the supplement ($284,960) for a new round of planning grants. DPI held meetings at five locations around the state to help and encourage potential applicants. The planning grants should be awarded by October 1997. DPI reserved the remaining 5 percent ($25,000) of the supplemental federal grant for administrative purposes. A copy of the DPI's Grant Performance Report, which was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in July 1997, is included in this publication as Appendix E.

"Requests for funding under this grant program exceeded $2 million," said State Superintendent Benson, indicating the interest in financial support for school innovation. "We had some difficult decisions to make in allocating grants and, regrettably, some wonderful proposals simply could not be funded. Those that received money have an excellent opportunity to expand existing programs or plan for new charter schools to serve local needs."

## *Accountability*

Local school boards hold charter schools accountable in three major areas: student performance, fiscal management, and adherence to their contracts and the charter school law. Failure in any one of these areas may lead a school board to revoke the charter.

Before a charter school begins operating, the petition must have clearly stated the school's curricular goals, instructional methodology, and means of assessing student performance. These statutory requirements become part of the business contract between the local school board and the charter school. Student performance and the time frame in which improvements must be achieved thus become a contract provision for which the charter school is accountable.

In the area of fiscal management, the law requires charter schools to "comply with generally accepted accounting standards." The schools are subject to annual audits by the local school districts in which they are located. Principals, teachers, and parents working to make a charter school a success may find that they lack expertise in this

Table 2

### 1997 Federal Planning Grant Recipients

Through the federal charter school program, 13 proposed charter schools received a total of $258,637. An additional $284,960 in planning grants should be awarded in October 1997.

| School | Requested | Awarded |
|---|---|---|
| Appleton Area School District, The Academy | $25,000 | $15,000 |
| Kenosha Unified School District, Brompton School | $25,000 | $20,000 |
| Kenosha Unified School District, Paideia Charter School Academy | $25,000 | $5,000 |
| Lac du Flambeau, Ishpijise School | $25,000 | $25,000 |
| Lancaster Community Schools, Personalized Path Program | $25,000 | $25,000 |
| Marshall Public Schools, Dane County Transitional School | $18,123 | $18,123 |
| Milwaukee Public Schools, Opportunities Industrialization Center of Greater Milwaukee | $25,000 | $16,521 |
| Milwaukee Public Schools, Transcenter Charter School | $25,000 | $25,000 |
| Milwaukee Public Schools, YWCA Charter Schools | $25,000 | $25,000 |
| North Crawford Public Schools, Kickapoo Environmental Studies Institute | $21,893 | $21,893 |
| School District of River Falls, River Falls Charter Middle School | $25,000 | $25,000 |
| School District of Sturgeon Bay, Feasibility Study-Multi-age Grouping K-5 | $17,100 | $12,100 |
| School District of West Allis-West Milwaukee, West Allis-West Milwaukee Charter School | $25,000 | $25,000 |
| **Total** | **$307,116** | **$258,637** |

area. Some schools have met the challenge by creating parent budget committees or by hiring private financial consultants to help with issues such as financial management, record-keeping, fundraising, and budget projections.

Last, the schools are accountable for maintaining all of the provisions of their charters with the local school boards. They must also adhere to the Wisconsin Charter School Law, including voluntary admissions, nondiscriminatory practices, and health and safety requirements. The law also requires charter schools to participate in the Wisconsin Student Assessment System and the annual school performance report produced by DPI.

For an explanation of the responsibilities of the school board, petitioner, the DPI, state superintendent, and charter school under Wisconsin's charter school law, refer to Appendix F.

Appendix G contains information about contacting people who work with individual charter schools.

# Wisconsin Charter Schools 2

*Appleton Central Alternative School*

*Beaver Dam Charter School*

*Deerfield Alternative High School*

*McKinley Charter School, Eau Claire*

*School of Technology and Arts (SOTA), La Crosse*

*Ladysmith Evening Alternative School*

*Affiliated Alternatives, Madison*

*James C. Wright Middle School, Madison*

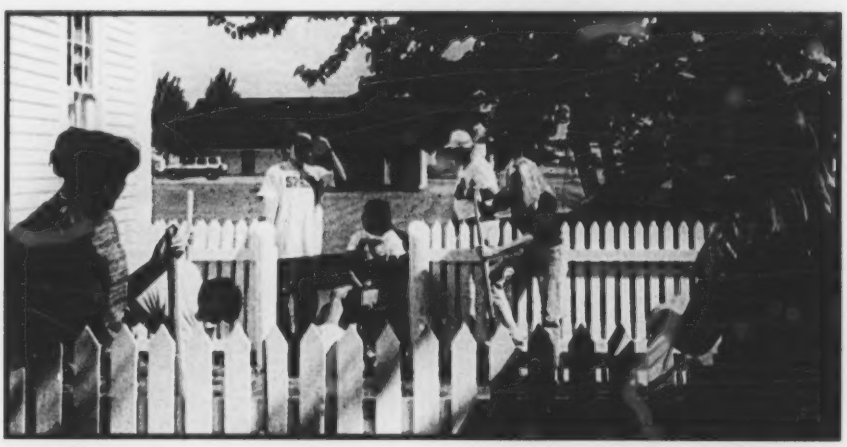
*Middleton Alternative Senior High (M.A.S.H.)*

*Highland Community School, Milwaukee*

*Teachers Educating, Advising, Mentoring Students (T.E.A.M.S.), Stevens Point*

*Core Knowledge Charter School, Verona*

*New Century School, Verona*



# *Appleton Central Alternative School*

120 East Harris Street
Appleton, WI 54913
LuAnn Coenen
(920) 832-6136

Appleton Central Alternative School, housed on the first floor in the Appleton Area School District's Morgan Building, is designed to serve youths in grades 9 through 12. These students have problems that cannot be dealt with in a traditional school setting or its at-risk programs because of exceptional personal needs. Appleton Central Alternative School provides an alternative method of continued learning in an atmosphere that is sensitive and suited to the development of the students' intellectual, physical, and social capabilities.

This school places special emphasis on the development of close relationships among students and faculty and fosters a sense of belonging. Because the charter school offers activities that specifically encourage active student participation, there is rapport among students and staff. Student success is achieved through a combination of motivational and developmental curriculum, small classes, a remedial academic program, and the option of work/volunteer experience.

The curriculum of the alternative school is self-paced, individualized, and competency-based, but includes the core subjects of English, reading, math, science, and social studies. Students are able to choose the academic options that best meet their needs. These choices include adapted curriculum for basic skill development and credit deficiencies, high school diploma, and High School Equivalency Diploma or General Equivalency Diploma certificate. Another component provides a link to the world of work that shows the relevancy of the academic portion of the program. Flexibility allows for students to reevaluate and change options at any time.

The school's broad goals include providing personalized instruction for each student, motivating students to develop more positive attitudes toward school, improving school attendance, enhancing students' self-image, and improving the communication between parents, students, school and the community. Character education is also important, including appropriate decision-making, honesty, integrity, and persistence in the face of adversity. Appleton Central Alternative School achieves all of these goals by two primary means: first, through technology in academics and, second, through work experience.

## Technology

Teachers use computers frequently to implement the critical elements of effective education—diagnosis, prescription, and evaluation. The *Integrated Learning Systems Lab* instructional approach delivers flexible individualized self-paced instruction and broadens the definition of "basic skills" to include problem-solving, critical thinking, and hypothesis-testing. The *Integrated Learning Systems Lab* prepares students for work and lifelong learning. Research has shown that an online curriculum allows students from diverse backgrounds to interact, resulting in improved communication skills and motivation. Computer-assisted instruction provides students, teachers, and parents great detail in the reports it produces to monitor individual student performance in the short- and long-term. Teachers use portfolio information to identify students' individual strengths and weaknesses and to plan appropriate instruction or intervention.

## Work Experience

School staff also use work experience to enhance a student's education by connecting work and school. Work experience provides an excellent choice for students who are at risk of dropping out because they need to work. The program includes employing pupils in part-time jobs that have been designated as educational. A coordinator employed by the school district supervises these students. Career exploration allows students to develop marketable job skills while giving them the chance to meet the district diploma requirements for high school graduation.

This charter school requires attendance for a minimum of 15 hours per week, an average of three hours per day. The student is then excused, allowing time for outside employment.

The school runs two shifts, three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon, allowing each student to work a morning or afternoon job. Because students on this three-hour school day earn fewer credits toward graduation than traditional students, work experience provides an opportunity for charter school pupils to receive credit equivalent to one or two instructional periods per week. The number of hours a student may work outside school is unrestricted. Charter school students earn credit while working at paying jobs. Volunteer work in the community, at the school, or as an apprentice, also qualifies for credit.

The Adult Basic Learning Exams (ABLE) have been selected for measuring program effectiveness, and they are administered to students at the beginning and end of a term or program. ABLE is a complete battery of tests that measure the level of educational achievement, regardless of student background or level of schooling. The ABLE subtests cover the basic skills in the context of adult competencies. Test content centers on situations adults are likely to encounter in everyday life, making the tests relevant and interesting.

Table 3

## Appleton Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | Appleton Central Alternative High School[1] | | Appleton Area School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | 9-12 | | 9-12 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 91 | | 4,350 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 59 | 64.8 | 2,217 | 50.9 |
| Females | 32 | 35.2 | 2,133 | 49.1 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 3 | 3.3 | 28 | 0.6 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 7 | 8.0 | 259 | 6.0 |
| Blacks | 0 | 0.0 | 38 | 0.9 |
| Hispanics | 2 | 2.0 | 60 | 1.4 |
| Whites | 79 | 86.8 | 3,965 | 91.1 |
| **At-Risk Students**[3] | 91 | 100.0 | 402 | 9.2 |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 14 | 15.4 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 11 | 12.1 | 56 | 1.3 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 25 | 27.5 | data not available | 15.2[4] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]Data on at-risk students are for 1995-96 and are provided by DPI's Center for Education Statistics.
[4]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *Beaver Dam Charter School*

400 East Burnett Street
Beaver Dam, WI 53916
Don Smith
(920) 885-7423

Beaver Dam Charter School serves 150 students in grades 6 through 12 who have a well-documented record of failure in the traditional school setting.

The school serves about 12 percent of the Beaver Dam high school population and maintains a waiting list for students wanting to participate. The school's program coordinator says that changing families and the influence of drugs among school-aged children is a major contributor to the increasing need for specialized school programming in Beaver Dam. About 75 percent of the charter school's students come from broken homes or have had trouble with drug use. However, in the charter school environment, these students seem to flourish. Truancy is not a problem, according to the school counselor; when charter school students were enrolled at the regular middle school, attendance was 51 percent, but it is 94 percent at the charter school. There are few rules at the charter school, so students become responsible for their own behavior. There have been no fights at the charter school in its 2-1/2 year history. Students know that they are in a special school, probably the last place in the community that will accept them, and with others waiting to get in, they don't want to lose their place in the school.

The Beaver Dam Charter School assists students in becoming valuable members of the community through three major program components: academics; personal and social skill development; and community service and employability skills.

## Academics

In the academic area students may be working toward a traditional high school diploma, a High School Equivalency Diploma, a General Equivalency Diploma, or simply taking course work in an area of interest. Whenever possible, the curriculum is project-oriented, with an emphasis on hands-on learning activities rather than information mastery. Course work includes language arts, math, science and health, social studies, computer literacy, business, employability, and applied life skills. Students select course work from self-paced course packets, computer instruction, group instruction, independent study, or a combination of these.

## Personal and Social Development

After a long history of failure in the traditional school setting, many at-risk students arrive at the charter school exhibiting a general mistrust of authority figures, a great deal of difficulty controlling anger, an inability to resolve conflict other than by physical means, and, in general, exhibiting socially inappropriate behavior. The personal and social skills component aims to create positive and respectful relations among adults and students, conveying a message of concern and offering direct help for individuals and their personal problems. This component helps students identify their place in society based on links among self, school, and one's future. Students address topics such as truancy, responsibility, goal-setting, peer relationships, relationships with adults, and conflict resolution. Community mental health care providers and district pupil services staff address these issues through group presentations, individual counseling, team-building activities, field trips, community service projects, and more traditional paper and pencil activities. In this area, the staff serve as more than just instructors, but as a surrogate family, modeling appropriate relationships and behaviors.

## Employability

Employability, the final program component, helps ensure a successful school-to-work transition. Here again, based on individual interests and strengths, students are introduced to the world of work and given a wide range of experiences and information. Areas covered include job-seeking, job-keeping, entry-level skills, occupation and job exploration, and an array of work-based learning experiences. The employability curriculum is based upon the Secretary of Labor's Commission

on Achieving National Skills (SCANS) report of workplace competencies. All students are expected to participate in employment or complete community service projects through local, private, and public places of business. Industry has been extremely supportive, not only in offering work stations, but also in collaborating with charter school staff regarding student performance so that the work site might be a teaching experience. At the time of graduation, charter school students leave with extensive portfolios and summaries of job-related experiences, such as letters of application, resumés, community service projects, work experiences, and job readiness endorsements completed by charter staff and employers.

These Beaver Dam students know that the community supports them because taxpayers voted to increase taxes for their charter school. Community service projects and field trips thus have been aimed at instilling a desire and need in the students to give back to the community. Students have worked with the Beaver Dam River and Lake Association to clean up the Beaver Dam River. An expanding project at the Horicon Marsh nearby serves as both an academic and work learning experience. In 1996 at the Ottawa National Forest and Bird Sanctuary, Beaver Dam Charter School students helped to build miles of walking trails, put up signs for visitors, and plant more than 1,000 white pines.

The school's staff members strive to provide a caring, supportive environment in which learners develop and complete a meaningful course of study or training. Students collaborate with their teachers and parents to map out programs incorporating academics, personal and social skill development, and employability. After the student and parent discuss areas of focus in the three different program components, the student, parent, and teacher sign an individualized contract that outlines the parameters of the student's program. Since not all students come to the program with the same skills, the focus on program components varies from student to student. The parents work closely with staff not only in the development of their children's programs but also in assessing student progress.

The middle school program is a full-day program staffed by one teacher and a tutor, serving 12 students. The students do some academic work in a computer lab, with the remainder of their day spent in a home-like environment, a classroom with a kitchen and living area. The informality seems conducive to the learning style of the students, and the setting supports education in life skills areas.

The charter school also runs a special education alternative program staffed by one teacher and a tutor. This program is divided into morning and afternoon sessions. These students, who are learning disabled or emotionally disturbed, have been adapting well in the charter school environment.

The high school program includes a morning school session for juniors and seniors, allowing them to hold jobs or do community service projects in the afternoon. Freshmen and sophomores attend morning school sessions at the regular high school and have afternoon school sessions at the charter school. A goal of the charter school is to integrate freshmen and sophomores back into the high school setting, but most of these students elect to stay at the charter school full time once they become juniors and seniors.

A night program for students 18 and older allows students to achieve their educational goals, even if they have to work during the day. A separate school-aged parent program provides on-site child care for charter students.

Student admission to this charter school is based on attendance records, academic records, and behavioral and psychological needs. Because of limited enrollment, charter school staff use various means to screen potential program candidates. The charter school staff developed a candidate profile that identifies student characteristics that likely will lead to student success in the program. The charter school staff members further screen a student who fits this profile in several categories or is referred by multiple sources. The student's academic and behavioral record is considered, along with a current interview. Students may refer themselves or be referred by parents, employers, friends, or other concerned persons who know them well.

Management of the charter school is through a site-based work team with all employees participating in decision-making. Charter school staff hold weekly meetings to discuss any school management topics of concern. An advisory board made up of parents, community business leaders, charter school

staff, and administrators developed the process for a smooth flow of communication and information among employers of charter students and school staff.

The district's director of pupil services serves as an administrative liaison between the board of education and the site-based work team at the charter school. At the close of each school year, the charter school staff present evaluation data to the board. These data address student progress as well as the overall progress toward achieving charter school objectives.

Table 4

## Beaver Dam Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | Beaver Dam Charter School[1] | | Beaver Dam School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | 6-12 | | 6-12 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 147 | | 1,903 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 89 | 60.5 | 977 | 51.3 |
| Females | 58 | 39.5 | 926 | 48.7 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 0.3 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 0 | 0.0 | 15 | 0.8 |
| Blacks | 1 | 0.7 | 8 | 0.4 |
| Hispanics | 7 | 4.8 | 56 | 2.9 |
| Whites | 139 | 94.5 | 1,819 | 95.6 |
| **At-Risk Students** | 147 | 100.0 | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 16 | 10.9 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.05 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 6 | 4.0 | data not available | 14.5[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *Deerfield Alternative High School*

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The Deerfield Alternative High School serves 15 students, the majority of whom have been identified as being at risk. The school's philosophy is built on the principles of respect, care and support, high expectations, and the opportunity to participate. The smallness of the school is a guarantee of support and individual attention. The Deerfield Alternative High School's staff recognize that the traditional school setting does not meet some students' educational needs. They feel it is their mission to provide an environment that promotes these students' social, emotional, academic, and vocational growth.

The school itself resides within the high school building but is autonomous in terms of program goals, staff, and policies. One teacher and one aide run the program, but the school receives services from the school social worker, counselor, and other support staff. The high school also supports the charter school with the use of facilities like the gymnasium and the home economics rooms.

The curriculum is based on applied knowledge such as communication, thinking, and decision-making. As students apply their knowledge within and across the various curricular areas, they develop complex thinking skills. The charter school emphasizes five main areas of concentration: application of basics, ability to think, skill in communication, production of quality work, and connections with the community.

The most distinguishing characteristic of the Deerfield Alternative High School is that it uses "theme-based units" in lieu of traditional classes, hoping to tap into student interests and strengths. With guidance from the teacher, the students develop a list of interests within the core areas of academics, and the teacher develops theme-based units from this list. Theme-based classes are held for 45 minutes every day, including a portion of lecture, discussion, and hands-on learning projects. Because photography was one of the 1996-97 themes, the school is working to establish a darkroom and purchase related technology. The Cooperative Extension Division of the University of Wisconsin Extension has provided volunteer interest group instructors in the areas of agriculture, life skills, and nutrition. Students visited the Wisconsin Supreme Court, watched a case being tried and then interviewed one of the justices. Seniors prepared for independent living through mock interviews and apartment hunting field trips. Students are encouraged to embrace the process of their learning, not just the end product. Hands-on learning is a big factor. Instead of cramming for exams, students actually look forward to facing tests or presenting projects, confident that they know the material and proud to show and share their knowledge.

In addition, students are involved in community service projects and volunteer activities to gain a better sense of pride and belonging within their community. The result is increased self-esteem and confidence. Students are overcoming the isolation of their rural town and gaining a larger sense of community through technology, using the Internet to facilitate global communication and learning. All community service projects and technology training are tied back into a theme-based unit.

Teachers, students, and parents cooperate to establish individual learning plans. The school provides students with nontraditional approaches to meet their high school graduation requirements. Teachers and students develop a personal curriculum to meet credit requirements in core course subjects. Students have an option to work independently in their area of choice at their own pace, but receive more guidance and structure from teachers in core areas like history.

Evaluation of progress is performance-based through portfolios, conferences, videotaped presentation of project work, narrative style report cards, and some standardized tests. Parents take a key role in the school and are encouraged to visit often, suggest and contribute to unit topics, and to keep in direct contact with the staff. Students must take responsibility for their own learning and assume a student-centered role in their education, following through on concentrated projects.

Evaluation is based on attendance, attitude, pride, and effort. The school believes this equalizes opportunity between gifted students who dis-

play poor attitudes and those students whose grades in traditional classrooms often fail to acknowledge the student's work ethic. This makes a student's effort as valuable as the letter grade. Teachers keep extensive daily logs on the students, documenting progress and concerns.

Students in ninth through twelfth grades are referred to the program through the Deerfield Student Support Team. Deerfield staff, parents and community agencies refer children who lag behind their peers academically, are habitually truant, or cannot adjust to the traditional school setting. Students are encouraged to initiate meetings with the team. All students are eligible for the school but must first meet with their parents and the school staff to establish individual plans. Students are not required to participate; charter school staff want parents and students to choose this alternative style of learning.

The basic tenets of the governance policy for the school are participatory and shared decision-making among charter school parents, teachers, administrators, and, to a lesser extent and as appropriate, by some students. The board of education, however, approves all policy decisions.

The purpose of the Deerfield Alternative High School is to increase the number of students who experience success in school, graduate and develop the skills and knowledge needed for postsecondary education, job placement, and independent living. Through alternative educational choices, an environment is created that enhances a student's feelings of self-worth and ability to learn and to succeed.

Table 5

## Deerfield Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | Deerfield Alternative High School[1] | | Deerfield Community School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | 9-12 | | 9-12 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 15 | | 208 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 7 | 46.7 | 106 | 50.9 |
| Females | 8 | 53.3 | 102 | 49.1 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 1 | 6.7 | 2 | 1.0 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Blacks | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 1.0 |
| Hispanics | 1 | 6.7 | 7 | 3.4 |
| Whites | 13 | 86.6 | 197 | 94.6 |
| **At-Risk Students** | 14 | 93.3 | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 7 | 46.7 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 8 | 53.3 | data not available | 14.6[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *McKinley Charter School, Eau Claire*

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McKinley Charter School, established in June 1995, serves 53 students from the Eau Claire and Altoona school districts. Enrollment is anticipated to expand to 62 students in the 1997-98 school year.

The school serves two types of students. The first type includes emotionally disturbed or regular education students in grades 6-12 who are at risk of, or are returning from, expulsion or who are returning from out-of-community placement. These students (32 by June 1998) will pursue a credit diploma. These are students who cannot safely function in a regular school setting.

The school also serves students with less than 13 earned credits who cannot meet the requirements of the districts' competency-based program. Therefore, they are attempting to secure High School Equivalency Diplomas.

These two types of services provided at the McKinley Charter School are above and beyond the school within a school, alternative high school, and credit remediation programs provided by the schools in the districts. Students who request services from and are accepted into the charter school are students for whom all other regular education, exceptional education, and at-risk programs have not been or would not be appropriate. They often find themselves having difficulty at home or in the community.

The staff of the McKinley Charter School includes three teachers, four aides, a program-support teacher, and a part-time principal. All teachers are licensed and are seeking licensing in teaching emotionally disturbed students. All aides are licensed as handicapped children's aides.

The management system of the school is a site-based or shared decision-making model. The entire staff comprises the site-based decision-making team, which the principal facilitates. The program-support teacher functions much like an assistant principal, handling day-to-day operations.

Staff and students develop school rules and core values with input from parents and a nine-person governance board. This governance board includes a student, parent, high school and middle school assistant principal, a representative of the at-risk teaching staff, a representative of the Altoona School District, and three community/business representatives. These community representatives include the assistant chief of police, a former board of education member, and a former university professor.

The primary goal of the program is to provide an integrated academic, vocational, and behavioral program that will help students catch up in all three areas, ultimately graduate, live responsibly in the community, and achieve economic self-sufficiency through legal means.

The philosophy of the school is based on the following premises: 1) all students can learn; 2) a non-coercive climate/discipline model linked with research based on "best educational practice" provides the best environment for learning; 3) students need to be challenged academically, emotionally, and socially; and 4) positive adults who establish a community of care and concern are critical to the achievement of success.

An individualized learning plan is created with and a contract is written for each student. The school emphasizes three main skills areas for student achievement: academic, personal-social, and employability.

In the academic area, specific objectives are established in the core areas of math, science, social studies, and English. In addition, an adventure-based physical education curriculum is provided to build trust, responsibility, and appropriate peer and adult relationships.

The staff seeks to improve the students' personal and social skills through an atmosphere of mutual respect and a community of care and concern. Conflict resolution and anger management components are provided through classroom instruction, support groups, modeling by staff, and daily problem-solving activities. The curriculum emphasizes an understanding of community standards.

Employability skills are enhanced through career exploration, job search skills, work-based learning, and transition services into postsecondary education or the world of work. Placements outside of the McKinley Charter School are made

through a mutually agreed upon contract among the charter school, the designated school receiving a transitioning McKinley student, the student, and the parent. Staff also work with students to ensure the completion of community service hours.

Classes follow a flexible schedule. Students attend school daily from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There are no bells and set periods. The teaching staff has the flexibility to adjust the schedule to best fit each integrated thematic unit. The staff establishes learning blocks for each unit.

The school is in the process of developing and implementing an innovative, nontraditional, reality-therapy-based discipline, utilizing the theories of Conrath, Gossen, Glasser, and Kerner and Fawcett. The model provides a consistent program with a continuum of options and responses from minor to major interventions. The discipline model also emphasizes the development of self-control and provides a strong emphasis on character education. It sets the tone and climate for the school. National experts are serving as resources as the model is being developed.

Staff members evaluate individual student progress in academic skills, personal and social skills, and employability skills based on the goals of the student's individualized learning plan. The school also has an ongoing program to evaluate its own success in the areas of academic achievement, attendance, discipline referrals, and appropriate student behavior within the school and community.

Table 6

## McKinley Charter School, Eau Claire and Altoona Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | McKinley Charter School[1] | | Eau Claire and Altoona School Districts[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | 6-12 | | 6-12 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 53 | | 7,046 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 35 | 66.0 | 3,590 | 51.0 |
| Females | 18 | 34.0 | 3,456 | 49.0 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 1 | 1.9 | 49 | 0.7 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 1 | 1.9 | 440 | 6.2 |
| Blacks | 1 | 1.9 | 42 | 0.6 |
| Hispanics | 2 | 3.7 | 59 | 0.8 |
| Whites | 48 | 90.6 | 6,456 | 91.7 |
| **At-Risk Students**[3] | 53 | 100.0 | 170 | 2.4 |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 11 | 20.8 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 0 | 0.0 | 12 | 0.1 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 18 | 34.0 | data not available | 26.0[4] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]Data on at-risk students are for 1995-96 and are provided by DPI's Center for Education Statistics.
[4]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *School of Technology and Arts (SOTA), La Crosse*

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The School of Technology and Arts (SOTA) opened its doors in August 1995 as an educational alternative elementary school of choice. SOTA serves 69 students between the ages of five and ten from throughout the district whose families believe in the curriculum's technology and arts emphasis. Roosevelt Elementary School houses the charter school and provides transportation, administrative, and food service. SOTA follows the district's curricula, school calendar, and district/state testing programs, and is organized around five major constructs:

- multi-age, nongraded, continuous progress classrooms;
- assessment by performance, product and/or demonstration;
- customized educational programming options;
- emphasis on the arts and technology; and
- joint staff-parent school governance.

## Multi-Age Classes

Students are grouped for instruction into multi-age, nongraded continuous progress classrooms based on subject content, projects, skill level, and interests. Groupings are flexible and provide for equal educational opportunities. Each student is allowed to proceed at his or her own pace. Emphasis is on building an ongoing sense of safety, caring, trust, and respect within a multi-age community. Mixed-age learning lends itself to building a broader sense of community and improving social skills beyond the child's age level. The charter school staff believe that by removing artificial barriers and obstacles associated with traditional school structures, multi-age groupings enable each child to build on his or her natural pattern of growth. SOTA staff focus on developing strengths rather than recording inadequacies. It celebrates achievement rather than creating failure.

## Assessment

Assessment focuses on each child's progress and development with respect to goals and standards instead of making comparisons among children. Student portfolios and developmental rubrics are the primary means of monitoring, summarizing, and supporting the learning process. The portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that demonstrates progress and accomplishments across the entire curriculum. Assessment is clearly linked to stated learning goals. No letter grades are used. Assessment of student learning, thinking, and development is a critical part of education. The ways that children are assessed affect how they learn and influence their motivation to continue learning. SOTA strives to develop assessment practices that support and enrich children's learning, motivation and long-term development. Pupil progress is shared via conferences and narrative reports. Parents and students are also given opportunities to reflect upon learning on the report card.

## Customized Educational Programs

The school's customized educational programs are based on the students' individual talents, learning styles, and needs within the district's established curricula and testing programs. Customized educational programming is an evolving process that brings parents, children, and staff together to plan and reflect. SOTA staff believe that children and parents have a right and responsibility to be directly involved in the learning process. Parents are involved in helping their children choose meaningful learning goals that fulfill the curriculum's objectives. Parents also help to monitor their children's progress, and, based upon feedback from teachers, will encourage and support children's interests and efforts. Self-motivation is enhanced when children have input and ownership in determining their learning programs.

## Arts and Technology

The curriculum emphasizes the arts through dance, music, drama/theater, and visual arts. Individual creativity is nurtured and encouraged. SOTA staff believe that incorporation of arts and technology into the instructional delivery system enhances motivation and learning. The arts and technology

provide many opportunities to meet the diverse developmental ranges, interests, and learning styles of the students. The arts assist students in self-expression and the use of technology provides skills necessary for future success. Technology relative to the arts, including the use of computers, video production, and print media assists teachers and parents in maximizing the learning success of students.

## Joint Staff-Parent School Governance

Parental involvement in SOTA is a critical component and one that is highly valued. Parents and staff jointly make decisions and policies for the school. Parent-staff school governance provides parents more ownership in their children's education and brings more of a participatory, democratic process to public schooling. Through this involvement, parents better understand the educational enterprise and make a real commitment to the school and to the students it serves. Joint school governance directly links parents and staff with the responsibility for student success. A true commitment by parents enhances children's self-*motivation and ownership in their learning process*. Parents help to celebrate their children's learning and they model involvement for the students. And as they do so, they become more knowledgeable of the needs of all children, not just their own. The school wants all of its participants to truly believe that this is their school and that they play a significant role in its development.

An executive steering committee of ten parents and two staff members runs SOTA. The committee meets monthly. It addresses issues forwarded by parents, staff, students, or administrators and handles public relations, marketing and promotions, fund-raising, school policy development, parent mentorships, volunteer coordination, and evaluation of the school's plans for expansion.

Table 7

### SOTA, La Crosse Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | School of Technology and Arts (SOTA)[1] | | La Crosse School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | K-5 | | K-5 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 69 | | 3,520 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 32 | 46.4 | 1,852 | 52.6 |
| Females | 37 | 53.6 | 1,668 | 47.4 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 0 | 0.0 | 37 | 1.0 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 0 | 0.0 | 600 | 17.0 |
| Blacks | 1 | 1.5 | 97 | 2.8 |
| Hispanics | 0 | 0.0 | 16 | 0.5 |
| Whites | 68 | 98.5 | 2,770 | 78.7 |
| **At-Risk Students** | 8 | 11.6 | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 2 | 2.9 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 0 | 0.0 | 24 | 0.7 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 14 | 20.3 | data not available | 38.7[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *Ladysmith Evening Alternative School*

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Ladysmith-Hawkins School District established its charter school to provide a daytime alternative program, an evening alternative school, and an expanded summer school program to better meet the needs of a population of students considered at risk of not graduating.

Ladysmith High School deals with a very high-risk population of students, with many factors contributing to this challenging situation. Twenty-five percent of the high school's approximately 350 students are involved with referrals to social services. Poverty is a problem: 57 percent of the district's students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Rusk County's child poverty rate is 20.8 percent. The town of Ladysmith, with a population of 3,928, is the largest "metropolitan" area in Rusk County with the next largest city located almost 40 miles away. The isolation contributes to the high school becoming the largest social and academic center for the students.

During the 1995-1996 school year, 72 students at the regular high school failed to meet the requirements for passing to the next grade. The problem was most severe at the junior and senior grade levels where the majority of the students who did not pass were more than 1-1/2 years behind in school. The graduation rate is also decreasing, with only 85 percent of the seniors graduating in 1996.

The charter school's goal is to provide most at-risk students with additional opportunities to earn high school diplomas, to increase their technology skills, and to provide the same high quality educational standards as the high school, but using differing instructional methods. The charter school has three main objectives:

- to help nontraditional students complete courses and to obtain their high school diplomas;
- to provide the necessary technology skills to compete in today's world; and
- to provide students with the career and living skills they need to lead successful and independent lives after graduation.

In an effort to increase the retention rate and graduation rate, the school district has established a variety of educational options for the students. Ladysmith Evening Alternative School is a "school within a school" and encompasses three main programs:

- a tutoring and counseling program for at-risk ninth- and tenth-grade students enrolled in regular high school;
- a charter school evening alternative program for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students and returning seniors; and
- an expanded summer school for all students at the high school level.

Ladysmith enrolls 15 to 20 students annually in the evening portion and oversees another 50 to 55 in the summer school program.

The Ladysmith Evening Alternative School provides additional opportunities to nontraditional learners who have struggled in the normal school setting. The standards for earning credits in the charter evening and summer school are the same as those in the regular high school. The students need to complete the same number and type of credits specified for graduation by school board policy as regular high school students. The actual curricular material and instructional approach may differ, but the concepts taught remain the same. The classes in the charter school, whether evening or summer, are smaller than a normal high school class, allowing for self-paced or individual instruction. Students graduating from the charter school earn a regular Ladysmith High School diploma.

Students enrolled in the evening school are in eleventh or twelfth grade or are returning seniors. A high school committee refers students after school personnel try and document a series of interventions to help the students achieve in the regular high school. Students qualify if they are receiving court services and are behind in credits, are school-aged parents at risk of not graduating with their class, are seniors needing credits to graduate, are juniors two or more years behind in credits, or are returning seniors. There is an effort to increase student technology skills as well as academic skills. Students have career exploration and independent living skills classes in the Evening Alternative School and can earn credit for their on-the-job work experiences.

The regular high school principal is the administrator in charge of the charter school. A separate charter school coordinator directs day-to-day operations. Teachers at the regular high school assist with recommending students for placement in the charter school.

Credit for courses taken in the charter school are awarded in two ways. The first is based on the traditional Carnegie Unit and seat time system with a certain amount of time allotted to each curricular subject. The second way is based on completion of a self-paced curriculum recognized by the state of Wisconsin. Students earn both a mid-term and an end-of-quarter report. These reports indicate the number of hours earned and the student's progress in self-paced curriculum. In most cases the student earns a "Pass" or "Fail" grade for work completed. At the teacher's option, letter grades may be used.

Punctuality and regular attendance are expected. Students need to recognize that absenteeism will increase the length of time required for program completion. Students younger than 18 must attend 70 percent of the time or more or they will be withdrawn from the program.

The charter school evaluates its program's success in many ways. For example, students must complete school satisfaction surveys before they enroll and upon completing the charter program. The goal is a 90 percent satisfaction rate. Also, students must achieve a 70 percent attendance rating and an 80 percent course completion rating. The school seeks to graduate 80 percent of the students who enroll in the program.

Table 8

## Ladysmith-Hawkins Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | Ladysmith Evening Alternative School[1] | | Ladysmith-Hawkins School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | 10-12 | | 10-12 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 12 | | 334 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 4 | 33.4 | 169 | 50.6 |
| Females | 8 | 66.6 | 165 | 49.4 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 1 | 8.3 | 9 | 2.7 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 1 | 8.3 | 4 | 1.2 |
| Blacks | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Hispanics | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 0.6 |
| Whites | 10 | 83.4 | 319 | 95.5 |
| **At-Risk Students** | 12 | 100.0 | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 0 | 0.0 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.3 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 12 | 100.0 | data not available | 57.0[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *Affiliated Alternatives, Madison*

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The Affiliated Alternatives charter school is made up of four programs serving a largely at-risk population in grades 7 through 12: the Accelerated Learning Academy (ALA), the Work and Learning Center (WLC), the Cluster, and the New Educational Opportunities and Networking (NEON) program. Affiliated Alternatives utilizes quarterly "town meetings" to involve parents in important school decisions. Part of the school mission is intense collaboration with youth services agencies, county social services, and juvenile court. Within the school's total population, approximately 40 percent of students are African American or Hispanic, ethnic groups that have a disproportionately high dropout rate. Approximately 40 percent are from poor families. Affiliated Alternatives also serves many students returning to the district after expulsion, incarceration, or treatment.

## Accelerated Learning Academy

ALA's four teachers serve 60 at-risk students, 30 in grades 7 and 8 and 30 in grades 9 through 12. The typical ALA student has both academic deficits and a need for social and psychological support that mainstream school settings cannot provide. The primary goals of the program are to increase academic skills and prepare each student for a successful transition back to the mainstream or to another alternative program. This is accomplished in a school environment where students and parents feel a sense of belonging and where students are engaged in a fast-paced and challenging curriculum. Students cannot receive credit in a class unless they have 90 percent attendance and cannot remain in the program unless they pass five out of six classes. ALA merges the services of other schools, parents, community resources, and youth services agencies into a single, coherent program. Students attend six classes per day, five of which are academic. The sixth class is aimed at artistic, social, and occupational development. ALA staff members expect students to perform and improve in three categories: achievement (improvements in reading and math are especially targeted), participation (attendance), and attitude/climate (behavior, commitment to school success).

## Work and Learning Center

WLC serves 130 students who are at least 16 years old. Sixty-seven percent were dropouts who failed more than half their classes as freshmen and sophomores, but school staff recruited them for WLC so they could complete high school. The students said they had failed in school because they lacked support and guidance from adults at school and at home. The level of support that these students need cannot be feasibly provided within large high schools, but can be provided in smaller school settings that develop some of the functions and dynamics of a successful family. WLC functions with two units of 65 students, each with four teachers. Students enter the program in groups of 16 and remain together through the program's two-year sequence. The curriculum aims to develop productive workers, personally competent adults in terms of living, social and parenting skills, and informed and involved citizens. Career-related course work is supplemented with community-based employment training provided by business and industry. WLC emphasizes "social bonding," close affiliations within the instructional group and with teachers and employers. Upon program completion, students receive diplomas from their home high schools.

## The Cluster

The Cluster serves eight students of middle-school age, referred by an assistant superintendent because of behavior serious enough to exclude them from regular school settings, behaviors that could have led to expulsion. Students attend the Cluster only after a parent's request, as an opportunity in lieu of expulsion. The Cluster provides four hours per day of academics tailored to students' individual needs and six hours per day of activities fostering social and occupational

development. Academics are provided in a "one-room school" with a single teacher and an assistant. The six-hour time block addresses the behaviors that led to the students being referred to the Cluster in the first place. Students are in the Cluster for up to one semester and then return to a regular or alternative school setting.

## New Educational Opportunities and Networking

NEON offers academic, social, emotional, behavioral, and vocational opportunities to 15 eligible middle and high school students in the Madison Metropolitan School District. The charter program was started in the 1994-95 school year to meet the changing needs of students challenged with serious emotional disturbances. This program is founded on the belief that students with challenging behaviors can learn and make positive contributions to school and the community, and that programs should be made to fit students, rather than students to fit programs. The program has four main desired outcomes:

- to achieve intensive multi-agency collaboration and participation with Dane County Health and Human Services;
- to implement a highly specialized and individualized curriculum that emphasizes vocational skills, life skills, conflict resolution, and academics;
- to develop individualized student reintegration plans jointly with home, school, and NEON staff; and
- to provide carefully planned, well-structured opportunities to participate in learning activities in community settings.

Students are expected to arrive at school on time and be prepared to work, to show respect for themselves and others through language and behavior, to abide by the rules for the variety of educational settings, and to demonstrate that they are willing to work hard to make progress.

Affiliated Alternative Charter School's four programs are based on two core theoretical perspectives, social bonding theory and opportunity theory. These theories are derived from the belief that critical elements are missing in the lives of some youth, leading to problems such as delinquency and dropping out of school. Youths miss the sense of bonding—belonging, affiliation, commitment—necessary to maintain the motivation to succeed in school. Also missing is the perception that school is a viable personal route to future opportunity. The Affiliated Alternatives have, therefore, constructed school environments and activities that encourage social bonding and demonstrate to students the direct correlation between success in school and future opportunity.

The school follows the educational philosophy that remedial education is bankrupt, inadequate by definition because the longer students are in a slower learning class, the further behind the mainstream they will fall. School staff members believe that students who are behind must have opportunity to accelerate learning using a high order thinking skill curriculum that is similar to programming for talented and gifted students.

This approach to education for the at-risk population is innovative and successful, as indicated by the Affiliated Alternatives waiting list. Approximately 70 students are waiting to enter one of the four charter programs.

*See the next page for enrollment data for Madison and the Affiliated Alternatives program.*

Table 9

## Affiliated Alternatives, Madison Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | Affiliated Alternatives[1] | | Madison Metropolitan School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | 7-12 | | 7-12 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 198 | | 10,844 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 100 | 50.5 | 5,604 | 51.7 |
| Females | 98 | 49.5 | 5,240 | 48.3 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 1 | 0.5 | 58 | 0.5 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 4 | 2.0 | 764 | 7.0 |
| Blacks | 53 | 26.8 | 1,615 | 14.9 |
| Hispanics | 20 | 10.1 | 408 | 3.8 |
| Whites | 120 | 60.6 | 7,999 | 73.8 |
| **At-Risk Students** | 198 | 100.0 | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 10 | 5.1 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 0 | 0.0 | 24 | 0.2 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 80 | 40.4 | data not available | 28.0[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *James C. Wright Middle School, Madison*

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Rolland Willan
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The James C. Wright Charter Middle School in Madison, is a school of choice for students in grades 6 through 8. The school sought charter status from its inception in 1994 to gain flexibility in its curriculum and in student assessment. James C. Wright has an enrollment of 170 students and a maximum capacity of 240.

James C. Wright, formerly known as Madison Middle School 2000, is not a neighborhood school and accepts students by application only. Applications are reviewed based on students' academic and attendance records. The school is not an alternative school for at-risk students. It serves students who otherwise would attend two other public middle schools. Approximately 35 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

The school educates its students by providing them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to participate fully in an evolving global society. It seeks to achieve this goal through a comprehensive, integrated/thematic curriculum, culturally and ethnically diverse staff, and innovative and flexible ways of teaching and learning. Indeed, the three areas that distinguish this charter school are its integrated/thematic curriculum, emphasis on technology, and focus on foreign languages.

## Integrated/Thematic Curriculum

Unlike the traditional approach of teaching each subject independently, learning at James C. Wright Middle School is integrated and thematic. Skills in core topic areas such as math, science, social studies, and language arts are taught in context. There is a real effort to ensure that unit topics are consistent throughout each grade level. A 1997 unit theme was "self and others." In a combined science and social studies class, students discussed the physiological effects of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use on the body as well as the social effects of substance use/abuse on relationships, family, and society. The curriculum challenges students to synthesize their knowledge and skills.

*Technology*

The school's staff believe that students must have the technology tools to compete in tomorrow's world. Computer technology is considered another "language" at this school, and students must become proficient in using the computer as a learning tool. State-of-the-market resources are available to all students as part of their daily activities. From on-line information searches, to distance learning, to word-processing notes and class reports, each student employs technology routinely. All students have appropriate Internet access and personal e-mail accounts. The school has a one-to-one computer to student ratio, the highest in the district.

*Foreign Language*

The foreign language program is another distinguishing characteristic of this charter school. The school offers Spanish and French and is using the charter school teaching certification process to find native speakers who can teach language and culture. The school staff may consider adding Hmong, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, and Vietnamese to its curriculum.

## Improving Children's Success

Learning occurs in school and in the community beyond the classroom. In addition to the integrated/thematic curriculum emphasizing technology and languages, the school focuses on three additional points that it believes will drastically improve student success in school: parent involvement, community, and small class sizes.

*Parent Involvement*

This charter school is characterized by its participatory decision-making methods and parent involvement. The school is run by a "Core Group" that oversees four standing committees, including the school climate, budget and personnel, curriculum, and booster committees. Membership on all of these committees includes school staff, parents, and student representatives. Parents also participate in a

partnership/after-school program, providing two hours of supervision and homework assistance.

*Community*

There is strong community emphasis. Students learn to be socially responsible through community service and worldwide service projects. Contacts are maintained with the business community, the university, cultural and community resources, and social agencies.

## Class size

Class size is limited to 20 students in most cases to provide for personalized attention. This limited enrollment means easy access to all of the technology tools and other resources, and fosters a sense of connection among students, teachers, and parents. The school program is designed to recognize and nurture gifted behaviors in each student and provide personalized learning.

The school's staff members seem very willing to entertain innovative ideas. Parents have suggested that the school add Saturday classes. The school may also begin experimenting with multi-aged music classes. And while the school still uses traditional letter grades, it plans to move toward using performance-based assessment and portfolios once parents feel more comfortable with dropping the letter grade system.

Table 10

### James C. Wright Middle School, Madison Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | James C. Wright Charter Middle School[1] | | Madison Metropolitan School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | 6-8 | | 6-8 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 170 | | 5,523 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 90 | 52.9 | 2,648 | 48.0 |
| Females | 80 | 47.1 | 2,875 | 52.0 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 0 | 0.0 | 33 | 0.6 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 5 | 3.0 | 451 | 8.2 |
| Blacks | 75 | 44.0 | 915 | 16.5 |
| Hispanics | 5 | 3.0 | 246 | 4.5 |
| Whites | 85 | 50.0 | 3,878 | 70.2 |
| **At-Risk Students** | data not available | | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | data not available | | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | data not available | | 19 | 0.3 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 60 | 35.3 | data not available | 28.0[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *Middleton Alternative Senior High (M.A.S.H.)*

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Middleton, WI 53562
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Middleton Alternative Senior High (M.A.S.H.) started in the 1993-94 school year as a program for at-risk juniors and seniors. Two full-time and two part-time staff worked with 60 students. At the beginning of the 1994-95 school year, the district moved the M.A.S.H. program to a separate site within walking distance of the main high school and expanded the staff to four full-time teachers and one half-time social worker. The school board approved charter status for the program in May 1995.

Students in the third, fourth, and fifth year of high school may be referred to the M.A.S.H. program by Middleton High School administrators, guidance counselors, and staff. Referrals are based on a student being at risk, credit deficient, a teen parent, adjudicated delinquent, or dropout. M.A.S.H. staff members evaluate the student's transcript and attendance record and interview the student before deciding whether to admit him or her. Students who are not admitted are placed on a waiting list until an opening is available. The program's maximum capacity is 60 students.

The charter program's objectives include making students aware of the importance of attendance for success in school and on the job and encouraging students to develop organizational skills and a sense of personal commitment to excellence. Students learn to identify and utilize their individual talents and learning styles by becoming aware of the relationship between choices and consequences and the relationships among school, community, work, and career opportunities. Communications skills and independent living skills are emphasized.

Within the M.A.S.H. program, each teacher serves as a group teacher/advisor to 15 students. M.A.S.H. students respond well to the smaller classroom environment. Teachers report that their students have the skills, but histories of truancy, homelessness, substance abuse, and broken homes and families have stolen their attentions away from schooling. One student reported in a school survey, "the teachers at M.A.S.H. are nice. They listen to everything you say. They might not do anything about it, but they listen. That's what people need—just someone to listen to them." Indeed, teachers agree that they spend as much time outside of the classroom counseling students as they do in the classroom on academics, a fact that makes their job more difficult, but infinitely more rewarding than teaching in a traditional classroom.

The curriculum of the charter school is designed to meet the needs of each individual student. M.A.S.H. staff offers a variety of classes for academic or general credit, focusing on the 16 core credits of the regular district curriculum. Students have the option of taking their seven elective credits at Middleton High School. The charter school encourages cooperative learning and is project-oriented. It engages multiple intelligences and seeks to foster the development of self-esteem. Many students attend the M.A.S.H. program exclusively, while some may attend only one class and then return to the main high school for selected courses.

Students attend M.A.S.H for a five-hour block each day. While schedules tend to be highly individualized, all 60 students are required to be present for the life skills portion of instruction. During the academic portion of instruction, students pursue credit in areas where they may be deficient, including social studies, math, English, science, speech, and health. Credit is also given for voluntary community service such as tutoring or cleaning up in the forest preserve. The final component of the M.A.S.H. program is work experience, where students may receive one half or one full credit depending on the number of hours they work.

M.A.S.H. has a grading policy of "A," "B," "C," or no credit. To receive passing grades, students must complete all work at a "C" level or better. This has enabled M.A.S.H. students to become more responsible for their own academic work and has helped them earn better grades than in past high school experiences. The point of this system is to help students understand that they must complete all work satisfactorily.

Assessment and evaluation of student progress is based on attendance, participation in class ac-

tivities, satisfactory completion of all class work, and completion of portfolio requirements. The school monitors its own success in achieving its objectives through the use of many tools: improved student attendance and behavior, earned academic credits, graduation, development of post-graduation plans, annual student surveys, and reports to the school board. The program is proud that some former students have returned to become volunteer tutors.

The administration of the charter school is site-managed whenever decisions affect only the M.A.S.H. program. The four full-time teachers rotate annually in the role of program coordinator. Collaborative administrative decisions are made when they affect the regular high school program. The Middleton High School assistant principal is directly responsible for M.A.S.H. and serves as a liaison between the M.A.S.H. staff and the district administration and board of education.

The school district has added another program serving ninth- and tenth-grade at-risk students in the 1997-1998 school year, since M.A.S.H. is operating at full capacity. The new program is independent of M.A.S.H. and serves approximately 18 students with a capacity of 30. An evening High School Equivalency Diploma program serves ten to 15 fifth-year students.

Table 11

## M.A.S.H., Middleton-Cross Plains Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | Middleton Alternative Senior High (M.A.S.H.)[1] | | Middleton-Cross Plains Area Schools[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | 11-12 | | 11-12 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 62 | | 694 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 28 | 45.0 | 334 | 48.0 |
| Females | 34 | 55.0 | 360 | 52.0 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 0.2 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 1 | 1.6 | 10 | 1.4 |
| Blacks | 8 | 12.9 | 16 | 2.3 |
| Hispanics | 4 | 6.5 | 9 | 1.3 |
| Whites | 49 | 79.0 | 658 | 94.8 |
| **At-Risk Students** | 60 | 96.8 | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 3 | 4.8 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 2 | 3.2 | 2 | 0.3 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 15 | 24.2 | data not available | 8.4[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *Highland Community School, Milwaukee*

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In 1996 Highland Community School forged a new alliance with Milwaukee Public Schools when it became the city's first charter school. Highland is a neighborhood-based, parent-run early childhood Montessori program for children two-and-a-half through nine years old. The school converted to charter status in 1996, but has a 28-year record of helping children and families succeed. The school's mission is to provide quality Montessori education and a nurturing environment for an economically and culturally diverse group of children on Milwaukee's west side, to empower parents to become responsible for and involved with their children's education, and to be a force for change in the community and society.

Highland attributes its success to the unique aspects of its program. First, it is a community-based neighborhood school with a philosophy of providing support and stability for the entire family. Second, it offers a Montessori educational curriculum, which nurtures each child's inborn desire to learn and follows the natural plan/path of the child's development. Third, Highland is parent-run. This model offers the district the maximum flexibility possible under the Wisconsin charter school law in the area of governance and decision-making. The program is recognized as a model for parent involvement and empowerment throughout the community.

The Montessori program is a proven approach in high demand among Milwaukee's parents. Highland's students score well above average on standardized tests. A main goal is to help children become independent thinkers who will make a difference in the community and the world. Highland's 1996-1997 educational plan maps out in great detail the targeted goals and action plans for achievement in five academic areas of emphasis: math, scientific reasoning, communication, community membership, and the arts. This educational plan guides course activities in three program areas. These areas follow Dr. Maria Montessori's planes of child development.

## Absorbent Mind

The first program area, Children's House, serves children ages two-and-a-half to five. Dr. Montessori called this the period of the "absorbent mind." Young children are exploding into learning, gaining independence, and mastering skills. The focus is on aiding the child's development of personal responsibility and self-esteem in a safe, nurturing environment. Freedom of movement in the classroom enables the child to work alone or with one or two others. Classroom materials aid the development of the senses, language, and mathematical skills. Learning goes on through discovery, exploration, and cooperation with others. Older children are models and helpers for younger children.

## Cosmic Mind

The second program, Extended Day, serves five-year-olds who have made the transition to the second plane of development, the "cosmic mind." This phase is characterized by a dramatic shift from wanting to do everything alone to wanting to do everything with a group of friends. Children remain in the Children's House class in the morning. Five afternoons per week, five-year-olds attend the Extended Day program and participate in group activities such as cooking, building, camping, swimming, skating, and exploring museums. It also helps to prepare children for the transition from Children's House to the Junior Level, or for the adjustment to elementary school.

## Social Awakening and Responsibility

The Junior Level serves children ages six to nine, as they enter the age of "social awakening and responsibility." Children insist on justice and fair play and they need to know exact rules. They search for the why and how of things. They want to know what is good and bad. They develop an

appreciation of the value of things. The Junior Level classroom has the materials to advance the basic skills learned in Children's House. It sparks the child's imagination. Students use their basic skills to study and report on topics of their choosing. The curriculum builds on basic academic skills, including reading, writing, math, and science.

Highland's curriculum incorporates the goals of the Milwaukee Public School District's School-to-Work Initiative. Within the Montessori curriculum the relationship of work to real life is direct. Students develop a sense of responsibility for work through the practical life materials used in the Children's House. In Extended Day, they begin to take responsibility for classroom chores. This later extends to taking responsibility for the school and neighborhood in the Junior Level program. Highland's program also includes regular visits from community leaders. These men and women talk to students about their lives and their jobs and the relationship between the two.

This charter school also offers after-school and summer enrichment programs to provide affordable, safe, quality care for the children of working parents.

Highland was founded by parents who wanted meaningful involvement in their children's education. Today, that principle sustains the school. Each parent is required to provide 36 hours of volunteer time each year. Two-parent families provide 72 hours per year. Monthly education nights help parents develop the leadership skills they need to become advocates for their children's education.

A nine-member parent board of directors governs Highland. Each member serves a three-year term. They are nominated by the board's nominations committee and elected by a majority vote of the parents each spring. This process ensures that parents retain their role as owners and operators of the school. Parents make all the decisions that affect their children's education. The board hires and fires the executive director and principal, sets and carries out policy decisions, and is responsible for the school's financial well-being. The parent board of directors has seven standing parent-run committees: admissions, finance, fund-raising, nurturing/education, operations, parent involvement, and personnel. The executive director oversees daily operation of the school and shares management responsibilities with the administrative team, which includes the principal, the operations manager, and the parent involvement coordinator.

The school's board of trustees reflects broad support throughout the community. Trustees come from businesses in the community and share their skills to help the school succeed. The role of the trustees is advisory and fund-raising.

Highland is truly a community effort charter school, educating students, parents and the public on the importance and benefits of early childhood education.

*See the next page for enrollment data for Milwaukee and the Highland Community School.*

Table 12

## Highland, Milwaukee Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | Highland Community School[1] | | Milwaukee Public Schools[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | age 2 1/2 to grade 4 | | age 2 1/2 to grade 4 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 70 | | 47,725 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 28 | 40.0 | 24,510 | 51.3 |
| Females | 42 | 60.0 | 23,215 | 48.7 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 0 | 0.0 | 484 | 1.0 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 2 | 2.9 | 1,850 | 3.9 |
| Blacks | 47 | 67.1 | 29,758 | 62.3 |
| Hispanics | 3 | 4.3 | 5,676 | 11.9 |
| Whites | 18 | 25.7 | 9,957 | 20.9 |
| **At-Risk Students** | at-risk students not identified until grade 5 | | at-risk students not identified until grade 5 | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 0 | 0.0 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 0 | 0.0 | 439 | 0.92 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 32 | 45.7 | data not available | 73.0[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *Teachers Educating, Advising, Mentoring Students (T.E.A.M.S.), Stevens Point*

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The T.E.A.M.S. (Teachers Educating, Advising, Mentoring Students) charter school program served students in grades 10 and 12 in 1996-97. However, in the 1997-1998 school year, the program is a three-hour block for sophomores and a two-hour block for juniors, no longer serving seniors in an academic capacity. Seniors maintain their relationship with the T.E.A.M.S. advisor. There are approximately 100 students enrolled in this "school within a school." The charter school is located within the Stevens Point Area Senior High School (SPASH), sharing library, gymnasium, cafeteria, administrative, guidance, extracurricular, and transportation services.

In May 1996, SPASH researched the validity of nontraditional school programs within the Stevens Point School District by conducting a survey on parental perceptions, attitudes, and satisfaction with SPASH. The survey results indicated that a majority of the parents think SPASH is overcrowded and that their sons and daughters get lost in the largeness of the high school. They also indicated a need for more teacher/parent contact and the ability for students to work more closely with the teachers as advisors in smaller classes. Thus, the development of the T.E.A.M.S. charter school.

T.E.A.M.S. truly serves a diverse population of students. Many, but not all, are classified as "nontraditional learners," who need more individual attention or who learn better in a group-oriented, academically integrated, and participatory environment. Most classes range in size from 15 to 30 students. Integrated learning and team teaching are the biggest differences between the T.E.A.M.S. curriculum and its counterpart in the traditional SPASH high school. T.E.A.M.S. does serve some at-risk students, yet it is not an "at-risk" or "alternative" high school program; in fact, Stevens Point has a completely separate alternative school that serves at-risk teenagers, including those returning to school from the judicial system or other forms of behavioral rehabilitation.

T.E.A.M.S. is operated on the full-inclusion model, meaning anyone can apply to attend. About 20 percent of the students have disabilities, including cognitive, learning, emotional and physical handicaps, yet the program also includes middle-ground and top-end students. Participation is voluntary, and the program coordinator quickly notes that they do not accept students into the program who do not actively seek to become involved.

The class schedules are more similar to those in college than in high school, varying according to student need. In this way, the time fits the activity, versus the activity being forced to fit the time. Classes are longer, allowing for special projects and labs. Class size is smaller, allowing for more individualized instruction. In addition, some lessons are held in an "all-call" format in which the students and staff participate in a large group activity.

T.E.A.M.S. classes generally meet for about half of the school day. Sophomores are in a three-hour consecutive block of time. Juniors work in a two-hour block. Students take all of their math and other elective courses in traditional SPASH classrooms. Sophomores are taught language arts (English), biology, social studies, and World of Work (a career exploration course). Juniors are taught an integrated course blending social studies and language arts; the other hour will alternate between World of Work and ecology.

Instructors meet weekly to evaluate student needs and to integrate their subject areas in the teaching of a common theme or unit. The English teacher may have the students reading *The Scarlet Letter*, while the history instructor teaches about the Puritans in early America. Recently, the students learned about the ebola virus in biology class at the same time that they were assigned to read *The Hot Zone*, a best seller that graphically describes the killer virus. Since the school is located so close to the Wisconsin River, future plans include a river unit. Ecology lessons might include taking water samples to determine the effects of

local industry on the river; history class will cover the role of the river in the development of towns and businesses; tours at a local paper mill will emphasize the importance of the river to industry. Students learn how to learn through total submersion in interesting topics.

In the curriculum's World of Work component, students receive credit for work experience in the business community and for volunteer service. This program also includes in-school instruction in resumé writing, interviewing techniques, and leadership development.

Through this curriculum and method of teaching, T.E.A.M.S. hopes to achieve its stated goals, which are to:

- promote concern for fellow human beings;
- promote the ability to get things done and to work smoothly with others;
- value self-motivation as a way to learn, participate, and grow;
- increase a sense of competence, self-esteem, confidence, and self-awareness;
- value challenging experiences that include risk-taking and enterprising initiatives;
- increase a sense of usefulness and responsibility to a group, class, or larger community;
- promote assertiveness and independence; and
- appreciate skills needed for effective problem-solving.

In addition to standard grading procedures, student performance is assessed through portfolios. Teachers monitor and evaluate these regularly. In 1997, each graduating senior received a SPASH diploma, class rank, and grade-point average.

There are four full-time teachers in the T.E.A.M.S. program. The high school principal is the T.E.A.M.S. administrator, but the T.E.A.M.S. teachers share all decision-making responsibility. Just as the students must volunteer for the program, so must the teachers; the principal of the high school originally brought the T.E.A.M.S. program to the attention of the general staff by asking for volunteers. The staff's daily schedule includes five hours of teaching and a flexible advisory hour. The advisory hour is used to build relationships between the student and the teacher and for academic counseling, parental contact, and discussion of social and personal issues that may keep the student from focusing on learning.

All of T.E.A.M.S.'s efforts focus on the definitive goal of giving students the problem-solving and critical-thinking skills necessary to cope with the challenges they will face as adults in this competitive world. Students are encouraged to become lifelong learners and to desire further education, either vocational or academic, as well as to become positive contributors to the community.

*See the next page for enrollment data for Stevens Point.*

## T.E.A.M.S., Stevens Point Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | T.E.A.M.S.[1] | | Stevens Point Area School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | 10, 12 | | 10, 12 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 78 | | 1,416 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 32 | 41.0 | 717 | 50.6 |
| Females | 46 | 59.0 | 699 | 49.4 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 1 | 1.3 | 7 | 0.5 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 0 | 0.0 | 78 | 5.5 |
| Blacks | 1 | 1.3 | 15 | 1.1 |
| Hispanics | 1 | 1.3 | 19 | 1.3 |
| Whites | 75 | 96.1 | 1,297 | 91.6 |
| **At-Risk Students** | 7 | 8.9 | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 9 | 11.5 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 6 | 7.7 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 4 | 5.1 | data not available | 21.4[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *Core Knowledge Charter School, Verona*

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Fitchburg, WI 53711
Christine Uelmen
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Verona Core Knowledge Charter School (CKCS) opened in August 1996 with 150 students in kindergarten through seventh grade. With the addition of eighth grade and slots approved by the school board, enrollment is 242 for the 1997-98 school year. Charter classes are located at three sites. The elementary grades (1-5) are at Savanna Oaks Elementary School in Fitchburg; kindergarten is located at Stoner Prairie Elementary School, next to Savannah Oaks; and grades 6, 7, and 8 are at Verona Area Middle School.

CKCS follows a rigorous curriculum that focuses on core academics. After reviewing literature addressing educational research on teaching methodology and content, the parent organizers chose the *Core Knowledge Sequence* and *Direct Instruction* for CKCS's educational program. The *Core Knowledge Sequence* identifies the subject matter to be covered in literature, science, geography, history, art, and music. The *Direct Instruction* programs prescribe the content and instructional method teachers use for reading, math, spelling, and writing. These carefully sequenced and coordinated programs build on skills learned in prior years.

## Core Knowledge Sequence

The commitment to the *Core Knowledge Sequence* is based on the belief that this background knowledge is necessary for students to develop needed skills, such as critical thinking, persuasive speech and writing, and reasoning and analysis, to name a few. The *Core Knowledge Sequence* is not a list of facts to be memorized. Rather, it is a guide to coherent content from grade to grade, designed to encourage steady academic progress as children build their knowledge and skills from one year to the next. The *Core Knowledge Sequence* is distinguished by its specificity, but it specifies only a coherent minimum; the teacher remains free to decide when to go into depth and detail beyond what is recommended in the sequence.

The philosophy of the *Core Knowledge Sequence* is also based on the concept of cultural literacy. Cultural literacy is the shared knowledge that allows the members of a society to communicate efficiently. A broad base of knowledge promotes a common understanding in communication between generations, whites and blacks, Asians and Hispanics, and Republicans and Democrats, no matter where they were educated. For example, being able to put content such as the Battle of Bull Run, Doppler effect, Langston Hughes, modus operandi, and Indian summer into context will prepare students to read, write, speak and listen in a literate society. CKCS's staff members believe this holds true for all levels of ability and socioeconomic background. The *Core Knowledge Sequence* builds this cultural literacy, which will enhance communication for a lifetime.

## Direct Instruction

*Direct Instruction* complements the *Core Knowledge Sequence* and is based on the belief that every child can learn when the instruction is appropriate, and that failure of a child to learn is due to a problem with the instruction, not the child. The focus is on the teacher directing the instruction through modeling, frequent student response, and immediate feedback. *Direct Instruction* encompasses teaching essential academic skills (reading) and strategies (phonics) that utilize effective and efficient teaching techniques. *Direct Instruction* also guides the school's reading, math, spelling, and language arts instruction through the sixth grade. *Direct Instruction* has been thoroughly researched in the classroom since the 1960s and has been shown to be very effective among all students, particularly learning disabled, slow learners, and at-risk students.

Subject matter in the *Direct Instruction* programs is organized in a structure known as track sequencing, which introduces various skills simultaneously. As such, several skills are addressed each day. This approach allows the student to review and practice new skills over an extended period of time. This leads to continued improvement of the skills.

*Direct Instruction* programs teach learning strategies, rather than isolated bits of informa-

tion, based on the hypothesis that children will generalize their learning, applying the known to the unknown. This is done by breaking all skills down into smaller component skills that receive highly explicit, teacher-guided attention when they are introduced. The students are shown how these subskills connect with larger strategies. They learn to generalize about their strategies, and then they exercise those generalizations in problem-solving situations. For example, in spelling, children who learn 600 word parts called "morphographs" and three rules for connecting them can spell 12,000 words. Children rehearse the 600 word parts and three rules to a level of familiarity that allows them to spell the 12,000 words with ease. Throughout this process the emphasis of instruction shifts from teacher-directed practice to fully independent application. This *Direct Instruction* design has been applied to higher order skills, such as deductive and inductive reasoning in history, literary analysis, chemistry, legal reasoning, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

Another feature of *Direct Instruction* is that every child is an active participant throughout each lesson, not just when it's his or her turn. The result is a high energy classroom in which learning is vigorous, active, and constant.

The design of these program components and the school's daily schedule promote the success of every student. Daily record-keeping of student performance aids the teaching staff in identifying learning problems so they can administer prompt remediation. *Direct Instruction* and the *Core Knowledge Sequence* build on skills critical to later learning. These strategies are integrated with a unique daily schedule that includes multi-age groupings. At the elementary level, students in all grades participate in reading instruction at the same time so they can be grouped according to ability. The same method is used for math instruction. Continuous monitoring of student performance indicates when placement changes need to be made.

Parent involvement is another important component of the charter schools in Verona. Parents initiated CKCS. This charter school also emphasizes the parents' role as children's primary teachers of morals and personal values. With regard to student conduct, the school's staff members expect students to make good decisions on behavior in social situations and therefore provides guidance about manners, courtesy, and respect for others.

The original organizing group formed the nonprofit corporation Parents Advocating Student Success (PASS) to establish and oversee the operation of CKCS and assist other groups interested in this curriculum. The charter school is managed by a seven-member governing council comprised of four PASS members, the school's coordinator, one teacher, and one parent. The coordinator works full time and focuses on providing leadership and training in the implementation of *Direct Instruction* and the *Core Knowledge Sequence* curricula.

CKCS provides a choice of academic approaches and learning environments to the parents, students and teachers of the Verona Area School District. The idea seems to be gaining community support. The charter school recently petitioned the school board to expand its enrollment from 150 to 302, based on the school's waiting list and interest shown in the community, and the school board has budgeted for 242 students in the 1997-1998 school year.

*See the next page for enrollment data for Verona and the Core Knowledge Charter School.*

Table 14

## Core Knowledge, Verona School Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | Core Knowledge Charter School[1] | | Verona Area School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | K-7 | | K-7 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 150 | | 2,472 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 72 | 48.0 | 1,251 | 50.6 |
| Females | 78 | 52.0 | 1,221 | 49.4 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 0 | 0.0 | 10 | 0.4 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 1 | 0.7 | 49 | 2.0 |
| Blacks | 0 | 0.0 | 143 | 5.8 |
| Hispanics | 3 | 2.0 | 48 | 1.9 |
| Whites | 146 | 97.3 | 2,222 | 89.9 |
| **At-Risk Students** | 1 | 0.7 | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 7 | 4.7 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 0.1 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 6 | 4.0 | data not available | 8.7[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# *New Century School, Verona*

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June Coleman
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The New Century School in Verona was Wisconsin's first elementary-level and first parent-initiated charter school. It was founded as a partnership for learning among students, teachers, and parents. Its goal is to nurture the child's continuous progress and independence as a lifelong learner through an integrated curriculum emphasizing science, math, and foreign language. The program serves children in kindergarten through grade 5 in multi-age settings.

The multi-age classes are team-taught, and the same team of teachers stays with the children for two years. Team-teaching enables the teachers to assess children's progress in a broad range of activities and to establish goals for individual children, while allowing them a clearly understood agenda of expectations and responsibilities within the classroom. A number of years spent in the same classroom with the same teachers and classmates makes achievement easier to recognize by both student and teacher. This system offers the children consistency and continuity.

Learning is a cooperative effort at New Century. The basic philosophy is that children, teachers, and parents enter into a partnership of learning together. Parents and teachers work closely with students in designing goals, developing the curriculum, and governing the school. Success in learning means both individual achievement and cooperative learning with peers. Group learning encourages cooperative competition and teaches necessary social skills. Continuous progress learning helps a child learn according to his or her developmental ability and not strictly according to age or grade. Children are assigned to classrooms and teachers not according to age, but according to individual readiness.

Research shows that the multi-age format works well for older and younger children in a class. Multi-age classrooms encourage older children to demonstrate their own knowledge as they encourage younger children to achieve what the older children have accomplished, bolstering the self-confidence of all students in the classroom. This is a very social approach to learning where students can work at their own pace and still be with their peers. At the start of each new academic year, the children see their learning as directly continuing from the previous year. New Century School's staff believes this overall approach best meets a changing world where countries and cultures increasingly interact, where familiarity with science and math is vital, and where working cooperatively in groups and independently on individual initiative are all important.

The curriculum includes basic elementary academics such as language arts (writing, reading taught by the whole word approach, and oral skills), related arts (music, art, physical education), social studies, foreign language, math, and science. The curriculum is based on the district's K-5 guidelines for elementary skills; teachers then use various instructional methods to teach these skills. New Century School stresses real-life, hands-on learning opportunities through technology in the classroom and through interaction with the community. This approach encourages children to explore, investigate, and manipulate the world around them. Students are responsible for being active learners.

The curriculum is approached in an integrated, thematic manner, so that students see how subjects fit together and that solving problems requires many talents. The teaching staff meets before the beginning of each school year to choose the theme units that will guide instruction that year. The students' interests are also considered when planning the theme units. The goal is to have different classrooms focus on different parts of the same theme simultaneously, allowing teachers to work together and students to be challenged.

Math and science are emphasized through hands-on activities, projects, and laboratory time and are integrated into the teaching of other areas of the curriculum. Math and science are also emphasized through ongoing community partnerships with science-oriented businesses.

Spanish language is a standard part of the curriculum for all children in New Century School as a means to better understand various cultures and to encourage diversity and awareness. Students have language instruction twice a week. Studies

indicate that young children are more open to language acquisition than older children or adults.

The assessment method at New Century School is primarily performance-based. It is non-competitive and non-comparative in nature and relies heavily on goals agreed upon by the teacher, parent, and child. Because children are in a multi-age environment, the progress made toward a particular skill is not necessarily the same as other children in the classroom. The goal is for the children to complete the K-5 curriculum skills outlined by the district without emphasizing the path or amount of time they take. The focus is on the individual strengths and needs of each child.

New Century School's staff members believe in the importance of communication between parents and teachers. It recently received a grant from TDS Telecom and the Wisconsin Advanced Telecommunications Foundation to expand voice-mail systems to individual families, allowing for almost continuous, round-the-clock teacher-home interaction. Communication is the foundation of the school's behavior plan. Parents are responsible for teaching their children about responsible behavior and consequences. An all-day school meeting is held at the beginning of each year to review and discuss expectations for student behavior. The students must learn to use self-discipline to prioritize their job of learning.

The mode of governance for New Century School is the site council, a consensus-style decision-making body with subcommittees reporting on a monthly basis. Subcommittees include budget, personnel, public relations, assessment, and the teachers' curriculum committee. All subcommittees are comprised of parents and must have at least one teacher. In the classroom, parents contribute based on their interest and available time. The lead teacher, coordinator, and assistant coordinator handle day-to-day administrative duties. At the end of each school year, the site council meets for an extended retreat to assess the completed year and to set goals for the upcoming year.

In 1996-97, New Century School served 61 children in four multi-age classrooms: two for kindergartners and first-graders, one for second- and third-graders, and one for fourth- and fifth-graders. The Verona Area School Board expanded the school's enrollment by 20 slots for the 1997-1998 school year. New Century School's very diverse enrollment is representative of the district's elementary school population, drawing from 11 of the district's 13 neighborhoods and approximating the district's overall percentage in categories such as reduced-price lunch eligibility and exceptional education needs. The New Century School monitors its programs' success through extensive parent surveys conducted twice a year. Response has been very favorable, enthusiastic, and supportive.

*See the next page for enrollment data for Verona and the New Century School.*

*Table 15*

## New Century School, Verona Enrollment Data

| Description of 1996-97 Student Population | New Century School[1] | | Verona Area School District[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grades** | K-5 | | K-5 | |
| **Total Enrollment** | 60 | | 1,863 | |
| | *number* | *percentage* | *number* | *percentage* |
| **Gender** | | | | |
| Males | 34 | 56.7 | 946 | 50.8 |
| Females | 26 | 43.3 | 917 | 49.2 |
| **Race** | | | | |
| American Indians or Alaskan Natives | 0 | 0.0 | 7 | 0.4 |
| Asians or Pacific Islanders | 1 | 1.7 | 38 | 2.0 |
| Blacks | 0 | 0.0 | 116 | 6.2 |
| Hispanics | 1 | 1.7 | 33 | 1.8 |
| Whites | 58 | 96.6 | 1,669 | 89.6 |
| **At-Risk Students** | 0 | 0.0 | data not available | |
| **Learning Disabled/ Emotionally Disturbed** | 4 | 6.7 | data not consistent for presentation | |
| **Physically Handicapped** | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 0.2 |
| **Received Free or Reduced Lunch** | 4 | 6.7 | data not available | 8.7[3] |

[1]Charter school data are from a May 1, 1997, DPI survey.
[2]District enrollment data are for the same grade levels served by the charter school and are from DPI's Center for Education Statistics, June 2, 1997.
[3]This percentage for free or reduced-price lunch is for all grade levels in the entire school district. Source is DPI Food and Nutrition Services, October 1996.

# Comparing Charter Schools 3

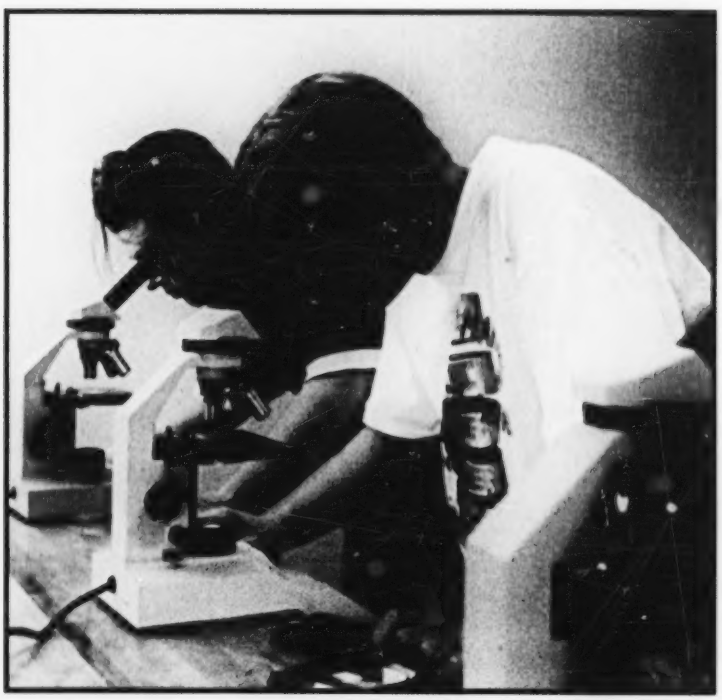
*Curriculum / Instructional Program and Method of Assessment*

*Staffing*

*Schedules*

*Populations and Locations*

*Administrative Information*



One thing is certain. Charter schools in Wisconsin are nearly impossible to compare on a one-to-one basis. While many of their goals in educating and preparing children are similar, each fulfills a very specific local need in education. Some simply want to offer a choice to parents and students in the area of curriculum, teaching methodology, and classroom structure. Others work feverishly to provide counseling and lots of personal attention and support to keep that small population of Wisconsin students from "falling through the cracks." The local communities, school boards, and parents have identified these needs and taken the steps they believe will best meet the needs of their students.

In reviewing the following tables and charts that attempt to compare Wisconsin's 13 operating charter schools, the reader will see just how different the schools are, despite their common goal of providing a solid education for their students. The charter schools provided DPI with these data for the 1996-97 school year in a survey dated May 1, 1997.

The data in these charts are from a survey DPI conducted of charter schools on May 1, 1997.

Table 16

## Curriculum/Instructional Program and Method of Assessment

One of the major tenets of a charter school is flexibility in the areas of curriculum, teaching methodology, and classroom structure. Charter schools are free to experiment in these areas in an effort to best meet their students' need. Below are some of the ways Wisconsin's charter schools describe their programs. These data are as of May 1, 1997.

| Charter School | Thematic/Interdisciplinary | Back-to-Basics/Core Curriculum | Individualized Education Plans | Home Study | Character Education | Focus on a Particular Subject | Vocational/Technical Education | Expanded Use of Technology | Performance Assessment, Exhibitions, Portfolios | Community as a Classroom | Multi-Age Groupings | Reality Therapy/Quality School Discipline Model | Community/Volunteer Service | Montessori Program | Ability Groupings |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appleton | x | x | x | | x | | x | x | x | | x | | x | | |
| Beaver Dam | x | | x | | x | | x | | x | x | x | | x | | |
| Deerfield | x | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | |
| McKinley, Eau Claire | x | | x | | x | | | | x | | x | x | | | |
| SOTA, La Crosse | x | | x | | | x | | x | x | x | x | | | | |
| Ladysmith | x | x | x | | x | | x | x | x | | x | | | | |
| Affiliated Alternatives, Madison | x | x | x | | x | | x | x | | x | x | | | | |
| James C. Wright, Madison | x | | x | | | x | | x | x | x | | | x | | |
| M.A.S.H., Middleton | x | x | | | x | | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | |
| Highland, Milwaukee | | | | | | | | | | | x | | | x | |
| T.E.A.M.S., Stevens Point | x | | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | x | | |
| New Century, Verona | x | | | | x | | | | x | | x | | | | |
| Core Knowledge, Verona | x | x | | | x | | | | | | | | | x | |

Table 17

## Staffing

Many charter schools emphasize a low student-to-teacher ratio and small class size. These data are as of May 1, 1997.

| Charter School | Average Student Teacher Ratio | Max Class Size | Number of Full-Time Equivalent Teachers | Number of Education Aides to Teachers | Number of Administrators and Administrative Support Workers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appleton | 10:1 | 14 | 4.2 | 1 | 2* |
| Beaver Dam | 13:1 | 21 | 5 | 4 | 3** |
| Deerfield | 10:1 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 3** |
| McKinley, Eau Claire | 8:1 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 0.75** |
| SOTA, La Crosse | 23:1 | 27 | 4.5 | 0.5 | 2** |
| Ladysmith | 5:1 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 1.** |
| Affiliated Alternatives, Madison | 15:1 | 15 | 14 | 2 | 2.5** |
| James C. Wright, Madison | 17:1 | 20 | 16.35 | 2 | 3 |
| M.A.S.H., Middleton | 15:1 | 15 | 4 | 0 | 2** |
| Highland, Milwaukee | 18:1 | 44 | 2.5 | 4 | 3 |
| T.E.A.M.S., Stevens Point | 20:1 | 24 | 4 | 0 | 2** |
| New Century, Verona | 14:1 | 18 | 4 | 1 | 2** |
| Core Knowledge, Verona | 20:1 | 20 | 8 | 2 | 2.5 |

*The director is the only teacher to have administrative duties
**Teachers have administrative duties.

Table 18

## Schedules

Some charter schools offer flexible schedules to students who need to work. Others provide tutoring and supervision of students in the morning and evening while parents are working. Summer programs may be geared toward helping students who need to catch up on their academics or toward providing a safe, educational environment to younger students with working parents. These data are as of May 1, 1997.

| Charter School | Flexible School Day | Evening Program | Summer Program | Before/After School |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appleton | | | x | x |
| Beaver Dam | x | x | x | x |
| Deerfield | x | | | |
| McKinley, Eau Claire | x | | | |
| SOTA, La Crosse | x | x | | |
| Ladysmith | | x | | |
| Affiliated Alternatives, Madison | x | x | x | x |
| James C. Wright, Madison | | | | |
| M.A.S.H., Middleton | | x | | |
| Highland, Milwaukee | | | | x |
| T.E.A.M.S., Stevens Point | x | | | |
| New Century, Verona | | | x | |
| Core Knowledge, Verona | | | | |

Table 19

## Populations and Locations

Wisconsin's charter schools serve students in every grade level, in rural, suburban, and urban locations. Some of these charter schools can be found within other public schools, sharing administrative services. Others are located in their own charter school facilities. These data are as of May 1, 1997.

| Charter School | Total Enrollment | Grade | Location | Share facilities with another school? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appleton | 91 | 9-12 | urban | no |
| Beaver Dam | 147 | 6-12 | suburban | no |
| Deerfield | 15 | 9-12 | rural | yes |
| McKinley, Eau Claire | 53 | 6-12 | urban | no |
| SOTA, La Crosse | 69 | K-5 | urban | yes |
| Ladysmith | 12 | 10-12 | rural | yes |
| Affiliated Alternatives, Madison | 198 | 7-12 | urban | no |
| James C. Wright, Madison | 170 | 6-8 | urban | no |
| M.A.S.H., Middleton | 62 | 11-12 | urban | no |
| Highland, Milwaukee | 70 | age 2 1/2 to grade 4 | urban | no |
| T.E.A.M.S., Stevens Point | 78 | 10,12 | suburban | yes |
| New Century, Verona | 60 | K-5 | suburban | yes |
| Core Knowledge, Verona | 150 | K-7 | suburban | yes |

## Administrative Information

For the charter schools that serve the at-risk student population, attendance rates and graduation/grade promotion rates represent students who may have otherwise "fallen through the cracks." Most charter schools have fairly extensive waiting lists, indicating the popularity of and need for continued charter school programming. These data are as of May 1, 1997.

| Charter School | Attendance Rate (Percentage) | Date of Current Charter Contract | Length of Charter (Years) | Number of Students on Waiting List | Grade Promotion/ Graduation Rate (Percentage) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appleton | 80 | October 1996 | 5 | 2 | 85 |
| Beaver Dam | 85 | January 1995 | 5 | 35 | 80 |
| Deerfield | 80 | November 1996 | 5 | 6-12 | 100 |
| McKinley, Eau Claire | 85 | June 1996 | 5 | 10 | 90 |
| SOTA, La Crosse | 96.35 | June 1996 | 2 | 20 | 100 |
| Ladysmith | 70 | April 1997 | 1 | no list | NA |
| Affiliated Alternatives, Madison | 90 | June 1995 | 1.75 | 70 | 70 |
| James C. Wright, Madison | 98 | December 1994 | 5 | no list | 99 |
| M.A.S.H., Middleton | NA | May 1995 | 5 | 34 | 98 |
| Highland, Milwaukee | NA | June 1996 | 1 | 15 | 100 |
| T.E.A.M.S., Stevens Point | 95-100 | June 1994 | 5 | 40 | 95-100 |
| New Century, Verona | 100 | April 1995 | 5 | no list | 100 |
| Core Knowledge, Verona | 100 | January 1996 | 5 | 152 | 100 |

# Appendixes

*A. Wisconsin's Charter School Law*

*B. Expected Changes to Wisconsin's Charter School Law*

*C. Teaching Requirements for Charter Schools*

*D. Charter Schools Receiving 1997 Federal Planning Grants*

*E. 1997 DPI Grant Performance Report on Charter Schools Program*

*F. Responsibilities of School Board, Petitioner, DPI, State Superintendent, and Charter School*

*G. Contacts for School Districts and Charter Schools*

# Wisconsin's Charter School Law

Established 1993, Revised 1995

118.40 Charter schools.

(1) NOTICE TO STATE SUPERINTENDENT. Whenever a school board intends to establish a charter school, it shall notify the state superintendent of its intention. The notice shall include a description of the proposed school.

(1m) PETITION.

(a) A written petition requesting the school board to establish a charter school under this section may be filed with the school district clerk. The petition shall be signed by at least 10% of the teachers employed by the school district or by at least 50% of the teachers employed at one school of the school district.

(b) The petition shall include all of the following:

1. The name of the person who is seeking to establish the charter school.
2. The name of the person who will be in charge of the charter school and the manner in which administrative services will be provided.
3. A description of the educational program of the school.
4. The methods the school will use to enable pupils to attain the educational goals under s. 118.01.
5. The method by which pupil progress in attaining the educational goals under s. 118.01 will be measured.
6. The governance structure of the school, including the method to be followed by the school to ensure parental involvement.
7. Subject to sub.(7)(a) and ss.118.19(1) and 121.02(1)(a)2, the qualifications that must be met by the individuals to be employed in the school.
8. The procedures that the school will follow to ensure the health and safety of the pupils.
9. The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the school district population.
10. The requirements for admission to the school.
11. The manner in which annual audits of the financial and programmatic operations of the school will be performed.
12. The procedures for disciplining pupils.
13. The public school alternatives for pupils who reside in the school district and do not wish to attend or are not admitted to the charter school.
14. A description of the school facilities and the types and limits of the liability insurance that the school will carry.
15. The effect of the establishment of the charter school on the liability of the school district.

(2) PUBLIC HEARING; GRANTING OF PETITION.

(a) Within 30 days after receiving a petition under sub.(1m) the school board shall hold a public hearing on the petition. At the hearing, the school board shall consider the level of employee and parental support for the establishment of the charter school described in the petition. After the hearing, the school board may grant the petition.

(b) A school board may grant a petition that would result in the conversion of all of the public schools in the school district to charter schools if all of the following apply:

1. At least 50% of the teachers employed by the school district sign the petition.
2. The school board provides alternative public school attendance arrangements for pupils who do not wish to attend or are not admitted to a charter school.

(c) The school board of the school district operating under ch. 119 shall either grant or deny the petition within 30 days after the public hearing. If the school board of the school district operating under ch. 119 denies a petition, the person seeking to establish the charter school may, within 30 days after the denial, appeal the denial to the department. The department shall issue a decision within 30 days after receiving the appeal. The department's decision is final and not subject to judicial review under ch. 227.

(2m) SCHOOL BOARD INITIATIVE.

(a) A school board may on its own initiative contract with an individual or group to operate a school as a charter school. The contract shall include all of the provisions specified under sub.(1m)(b) and may include other provisions agreed to by the parties.

(b) A school board may not enter into a contract under par. (a) that would result in the conversion of all of the public schools in the school district to charter schools unless the school board complies with sub. (2)(b)2.

(3) CONTRACT.

(a) If the school board grants the petition under sub. (2)(a), the school board shall contract with the person named in the petition under sub. (1m)(b)1 to operate the school as a charter school under this section. The contract shall include all of the provisions specified in the petition and may include all of the provisions specified in the petition and may include other provisions agreed to by the parties.

(b) A contract under par. (a) or under sub. (2m) may be for any term not exceeding 5 school years and may be renewed for one or more terms not exceeding 5 school years. The contract shall specify the amount to be paid by the school board to the charter school during each school year of the contract.

(c) A school board may not enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located outside the school district, except that if 2 or more school boards enter into an agreement under s. 66.30 to establish a charter school, the charter school shall be located within one of the school districts. A school board, other than the school board of the school district operating under ch. 119, may not enter into a contract that would result in the conversion of a private school to a charter school.

(d) A school board shall give preference in awarding contracts for the operation of charter schools to those charter schools that serve children at risk, as defined in s. 118.153(1)(a).

(4) CHARTER SCHOOL DUTIES AND RESTRICTIONS.

(a) *Duties.* A charter school shall do all of the following:

1. If the charter school replaces a public school in whole or in part, give preference in admission to any pupil who resides within the attendance area or former attendance area of that school.
2. Be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices and all other operations.

(b) *Restrictions.* A charter school may not do any of the following:

1. Charge tuition.
2. Discriminate in admission or deny participation in any program or activity on the basis of a person's sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability.

(5) CHARTER REVOCATION. A charter may be revoked by the school board that contracted with the charter school if the school board finds that any of the following occurred:

(a) The charter school violated its contract with the school board.

(b) The pupils enrolled in the charter school failed to make sufficient progress toward attaining the educational goals under s. 118.01.

(c) The charter school failed to comply with generally accepted accounting standards of fiscal management.

(d) The charter school violated this section.

(6) PROGRAM VOLUNTARY. No pupil may be required to attend a charter school without his or her approval, if the pupil is an adult, or the approval of his or her parents or legal guardian if the pupil is a minor.

(7) LEGAL STATUS; APPLICABILITY OF SCHOOL LAWS.

(a) A charter school is an instrumentality of the school district in which it is located and the school board of that school district shall employ all personnel for the charter school. This paragraph does not apply to charter schools located in the school district operating under ch. 119.

(b) Except as otherwise explicitly provided, chs. 115 to 121 do not apply to charter schools.

(8) AUDIT. The joint legislative audit committee may direct the legislative audit bureau to perform a financial and performance evaluation audit of the charter school program under this section. The legislative audit bureau shall file its report as provided under s. 13.94(1)(b) by January 1, 2000.

Appendix B

# Expected Changes to Wisconsin's Charter School Law

1997-1998 Legislative
Changes Expected to Take Effect in 1997

Section 2830. 118.40 (1) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 (1) NOTICE TO DEPARTMENT. Whenever a school board intends to establish a charter school, it shall notify the state superintendent of its intention. Whenever one of the entities under sub. (2r)(b) intends to establish a charter school, it shall notify the state superintendent of its intention by February 1 of the previous school year. A notice under this subsection shall include a description of the proposed school.

Section 2831. 118.40 (1m) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 (1m) (a) A written petition requesting a school board to establish a charter school under this section may be filed with the school district clerk. If the proposed charter school would replace a public school in whole or in part, the petition shall be signed by at least 10% of the teachers employed by the school district or by at least 50% of the teachers employed at one school of the school district.

Section 2832. 118.40 (1m) (b) 7. of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 (1m) (b) 7. Subject to sub. (7)(a) and (am) and ss. 118.19(1) and 121.02(1)(a)2., the qualifications that must be met by the individuals to be employed in the school.

Section 2833. 118.40 (2) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 (2) (a) Within 30 days after receiving a petition under sub. (1m) the school board shall hold a public hearing on the petition. At the hearing, the school board shall consider the level of employee and parental support for the establishment of the charter school described in the petition.

Section 2834. 118.40 (2)(c) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 (2) (c) The school board shall either grant or deny the petition within 30 days after the public hearing. If the school board denies a petition, the person seeking to establish the charter school may within 30 days after the denial appeal the denial to the department. The department shall issue a decision within 30 days after receiving the appeal. The department's decision is final and not subject to judicial review under ch. 227. Section 115.28 (5) applies to this paragraph.

Section 2835. 118.40 (2r) of the statutes is created to read:

118.40 (2r) OTHER INITIATIVES.

(a) In this subsection:

1. "Membership" has the meaning given in s. 121.004 (5).
2. "Shared cost per member" means the shared cost under 121.0 (6) (a) divided by the school district's membership.

(b) The common council of the city of Milwaukee, the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Area Technical College district board may establish by charter and operate a charter school or, on behalf of their respective entities, may initiate a contract with an individual or group to operate a school as a charter school. A charter shall include all of the provisions specified under sub. (1m) (b) 3 to 14. A contract shall include all of the provisions specified under sub. (1m) (b) 1 to 14 and shall specify the effect of the establishment of the charter school on the liability of the contracting entity under this paragraph. The contract may include other provisions agreed to by the parties. The chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee may not establish or enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school under this paragraph without the approval of the board of regents of the University of Wisconsin System.

(c) An entity under par. (b) may not establish or enter into a contract for the establishment of a charter school located outside of the school district operating under ch. 119. A pupil residing within the school district operating under ch. 119 may attend a charter school established under this subsection only if one of the following applies:

1. In the previous school year, the pupil was enrolled in the school district operating under ch. 119.
2. In the previous school year, the pupil was attending a private school under s. 119.23.
3. In the previous school year, the pupil was enrolled in grades kindergarten to 3 in a private school located in the city of Milwaukee other than under s. 119.23.
4. In the previous school year, the pupil was not enrolled in school.
5. In the previous school year, the pupil was enrolled in a charter school under this subsection.

(d) The chartering or contracting entity under par. (b) shall do all of the following:

1. Ensure that all instructional staff of charter schools under this subsection hold a license or permit to teach issued by the department.
2. Administer the examinations under ss. 118.30 (1m) and 121.02 (1) (r) to pupils enrolled in charter schools under this subsection.

(e) From the appropriation under ss. 20.255 (2) (fm), the department shall pay to the operator of the charter school an amount equal to the shared cost per member in the previous school year of the school district operating under ch. 119 multiplied by the number of pupils attending the charter school. The department shall pay 25% of the total amount in September, 25% in December, 25% in February and 25% in June. The department shall send the check to the operator of the charter school.

(f) The department shall annually reduce the aid paid under s. 121.08 to the board of a school district operating under 119 by an amount equal to the shared cost per member in the previous school year of the school district operating under ch. 119 multiplied by the number of pupils attending charter schools under this subsection.

(g) The department shall ensure that aid paid to other school districts under s. 121.08 is neither reduced nor increased as a result of the payments under par. (e) or the reduction in aid to the board under par. (f) and that the amount of the aid reduction under par. (f) lapses to the general fund.

Section 2836. 118.40 (3) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 (3) (a) If the school board grants the petition under sub. (2), the school board shall contract with the person named in the petition under sub. (1m) (b)1 to operate the school as a charter school under this section. The contract shall include all of the provisions specified in the petition and may include other provisions agreed to by the parties.

Section 2837. 118.40 (3) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 (3) (b) A contract under par. (a) or under sub (2m) may be for any term. The contract shall specify the amount to be paid by the school board to the charter school during each school year of the contract.

Section 2838. 118.40 (3) (b) of the statutes as affected by 1997 Wisconsin Act (this act) is amended to read:

118.40 (3) (b) A contract under par. (a) or under (2m) and (2r) may be for any term and may be renewed for any term. The contract shall specify amount to be paid to the charter school during each school year of the contract.

Section 2839. 118.40 (3) (d) of the statutes is amended to read:

118.40 (3) (d) A school board or an entity under s. 118.40 (2r) (b) shall give preference in awarding contacts for the operation of charter schools to those charter schools that serve children at risk, as defined in s. 118.153 (1) (a).

Section 2840. 118.40 (5) (intro.) and (a) of the statutes are amended to read:

118.40 (5) CHARTER REVOCATION. (intro.) A charter may be revoked by the school board or the entity under sub. (2r) (b) that contracted with the charter school if the school board or, if applicable, the

entity under sub. (2r) (b) finds that any of the following occurred:
(a) the charter school violated its contract with the school board or the entity under sub. (2r) (b).

Section 2841. 118.40 (7) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:
118.40 (7) (a) Except as provided in par. (am), a charter school is an instrumentality of the school district in which it is located and the school board of that school district shall employ all personnel for the charter school.

Section 2842. 118.40 (7) (am) of the statutes is created to read:
118.40 (7) (am)

1. Except as provided in subd. 2., if a charter school is established under sub. (2m) and located in the school district operating under ch. 119, the school board of that school district shall determine whether or not the charter school is an instrumentality of the school district. If the school board determines that a charter school is an instrumentality of the school district, the school board shall employ all personnel for the charter school. If the school board determines that a charter school is not an instrumentality of the school district, the school board may not employ any personnel for the charter school.
2. A charter school established under sub. (2r) or a private school located in the school district operating under ch. 119 that is converted to a charter school is not an instrumentality of the school district operating under ch. 119 and the school board of that school district may not employ any personnel for the charter school.

Section 2842b. 118.40 (7) (ar) of the statutes is created to read:
118.40 (7) (ar) Nothing in this subsection affects the rights of personnel of a charter school that is an instrumentality of the school district in which it is located to engage in collective bargaining pursuant to subch. IV of ch. 111.

# Teaching Requirements for Charter Schools

Wisconsin Administrative Code, PI 3.03(10)

(10) CHARTER SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF LICENSE AND PERMIT.

(a) *Charter school instructional staff license.*

1. A charter school instructional staff license may be issued to an individual who holds a valid license issued by the department and shall have the same renewal interval as the existing license. A license issued under this paragraph authorizes the holder to perform any instructional duty in a charter school established under s. 118.40, Stats.
2. The district administrator or a designated official of the employing school district may request that a license be issued under this paragraph on behalf of the individual receiving the license.

(b) *Charter school instructional staff permit.*

1. An individual who does not hold a current license or permit issued by the department to teach in a specific subject area or grade level or does not hold a charter school instructional staff license under par. (a) may be employed as a member of the instructional staff in a charter school if he or she obtains a charter school instructional staff permit from the department. A 1-year permit under this paragraph may be issued if all of the following apply:
   a. A district administrator or designated official of the employing school district requests the permit following a search for a qualified, licensed individual.
   b. The individual receiving the permit has a bachelor's degree in the subject that he or she is assigned to teach or in a related field, or has formal proof of mastery in a trade that he or she is assigned to teach.
   c. Except as specified under subpar. d, the individual receiving the permit receives 6 credits of training or the equivalent each school year that he or she is employed in a charter school. These credits shall be part of an approved license program in the assigned teaching area.
   d. An individual who holds a terminal degree in his or her field and who is a full time employee of an approved teacher preparation institution in Wisconsin or an individual who has formal proof of mastery in a trade and who is a full time employee of a Wisconsin technical college district board is exempt from the requirement under subpar. c.
   e. A permit holder's practice shall be coordinated, directed and inspected by a person who is licensed by the department to teach the subject or trade that the permit holder is teaching.
2. An individual may renew a permit under this paragraph if he or she meets the requirements under subd. 1.

# Charter Schools Receiving 1997 Federal Planning Grants

**Appleton Area School District** **$15,000**
**The Academy**
The Academy Charter School for students in kindergarten through grade 8 would build on a foundation of research including Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, excellence in the performing arts, distance learning and technology, and a classic core curriculum. Charter school planning would include teams of community experts in the field, teachers, parents, students, and business and industry members.

**Kenosha Unified School District** **$20,000**
**Brompton School**
This charter school will focus on basic skills and a traditional curriculum in kindergarten through grade 6. The basic skills will include instruction in language arts, history, geography, science, and math with enrichment through the study of art history and the languages of other cultures.

**Kenosha Unified School District** **$5,000**
**Paideia Charter School Academy**
The Paideia Charter School Academy would include students in grades 6 through 8 with a focus on block scheduling, multi-age groupings, curriculum integration, and parent and community involvement. The learning environment would stress basic math skills, complex thinking and reasoning skills, writing, communications, literature, science, and the fine arts.

**Lac du Flambeau** **$25,000**
**Ishpijise (Ojibwe word for "fly upward") School**
This charter school, including students from all grade levels, would focus on advanced learners with evidence of high performance in creativity, intellectualism, artistry, and leadership. The school would follow Gardner's theories of multiple intelligences with student-directed learning and technology playing key roles in the learning environment.

**Lancaster Community Schools** **$25,000**
**Personalized Path Program**
This charter school, developed as an alternative school for students in grades 7-12, is committed to educating students in essential academic skills and to helping students develop personal skills and attitudes necessary for successful life pursuits. Students would be in classes Monday through Thursday for a total of 180 days focused on bringing school and work together in a more meaningful way.

**Marshall Public Schools** **$18,123**
**Dane County Transitional School**
A Dane County consortium of 16 area school districts intends to implement a charter school program for at-risk youth, ages 15-18. The program will integrate service learning concepts and the development of a family empowerment program that builds family ties or relationships among at-risk youth and their families.

**Milwaukee Public Schools** **$16,521**
**Opportunities Industrialization Center of Greater Milwaukee Charter Schools**
Students in grades 11-12 would participate in this program focusing on meeting high academic standards, self-discipline, respect, accountability, high self-esteem, competitive performance, interpersonal communications, stability, and personal growth. The curriculum would be consistent with Wisconsin's Educational Goals.

**Milwaukee Public Schools** **$25,000**
**Transcenter Charter School**
This school would challenge the definition of a "school." It would encompass the activities of three communities around Milwaukee: NOVA campus on the northwest side, Shalom campus north of Marquette, and El Puente campus on the south side. These sites for at-risk students would focus on combining academics with school to work and social skills components. The research of Gardner, Slywester and Hayes-Jacobs would influence this charter school philosophy.

**Milwaukee Public Schools** **$25,000**
**YWCA Charter Schools**
This school would specialize in grades 4 through 8 with an emphasis on careers that are nontraditional for women and people of color. The curriculum would help students achieve visions of their places in the world and address the steps necessary to gain the skills to succeed in high school, postsecondary studies and the world of work.

**North Crawford Public Schools** **$21,893**
**Kickapoo Environmental Studies Institute**
The goals of the Kickapoo Environmental Studies Institute include building a strong knowledge base with an integrated emphasis on environmental studies and the humanities for students in high school. Students would demonstrate the process of active learning as outlined in the Wisconsin Learner Outcomes and Wisconsin's Educational Goals. As an adjunct program, the institute will serve the Kickapoo Watershed Area by providing an academic resource center for K-12 home-based students.

**School District of River Falls** **$25,000**
**River Falls Charter Middle School**
The charter school program would serve middle school students ages 12 through 14. The curriculum and instructional practices would be based on collaborative learning, community building skills, lifelong learning, strong academics, and accountability for results.

**School District of Sturgeon Bay** **$12,100**
**Feasibility Study—Multi-Age Grouping K-5**
This multi-age charter school would contain an early childhood unit, a primary unit and an intermediate unit for students. The research of Elkind and Gardner will undergird the philosophy and the implementation of the Dimensions of Learning model. A Goals 2000 grant is supplementing planning and implementation.

**School District of West Allis-West Milwaukee** **$25,000**
**West Allis-West Milwaukee Charter School**
The charter school would initially serve students in grades 7 through 9. The program will have two primary components to meet the students' academic and affective needs. The program will also provide students and their families with social skill development, a comprehensive therapeutic component, and access to community resources such as counseling.

Appendix E

# 1997 DPI Grant Performance Report

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Grant Performance Report, submitted 7/15/97
to the U.S. Department of Education
Public Chartered Schools Program
Award No. S282A60019-96A
Performance Reporting Period: 10/1/96 to 9/30/97

## Project Summary

The purpose of this project is to strengthen Wisconsin's public charter school program by awarding planning subgrants to school districts exploring the possibility of establishing a charter school; by awarding initial implementation subgrants to strengthen existing charter schools; and by providing technical assistance and related services to charter school operators, advocates, and interested persons throughout the state.

## Project Status

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction received a federal charter schools program grant of $825,000 on October 1, 1996. Since that date, the following project activities have been accomplished:

1. Upon notification of the federal grant award, the state superintendent issued a press release informing the media, state elected officials and members of the state legislature of the new funding. In addition, a letter from the state superintendent was sent to Wisconsin's 426 school districts, 12 Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, the Wisconsin Charter School Association and approximately 75 education-related professional organizations, agencies and institutions.

2. During November 1996, five regional information meetings were held at locations throughout the state to disseminate information and materials related to both charter school planning subgrant applications and initial implementation subgrants. Approximately 150 sets of implementation application materials were distributed to the 13 existing charter schools. The Wisconsin Charter School Association participated in the meetings and offered technical assistance to applicants. During November and December 1996 a charter school program ad hoc advisory group met to provide recommendations to the state superintendent regarding the department's administration of federal funds. Members of the group included representatives of the governor's office, lieutenant governor's office, Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Wisconsin Charter School Association, Association of Wisconsin School Administrators, Wisconsin Education Association Council and the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators.

3. During the period October 1, 1996, until the application deadline date of December 20, 1996, approximately 200 requests for charter school subgrant information and materials were responded to by the department's program administrator. By the application deadline date of December 20, 1996, initial implementation subgrant applications in the amount of $1,002,209 were submitted by 12 of the 13 existing charter schools and 44 planning subgrant applications in the amount of $1,027,179 were received from local school districts.

4. Initial implementation subgrant applications were evaluated by a 5 member peer review panel January 8, 1997, and recommendations for 12 subgrants in the amount of

$525,113 were made to the state superintendent. Planning subgrant applications were evaluated by a 9 member peer review panel on January 9, 1997, and recommendations for 13 subgrants in the amount of $258,637 were made to the state superintendent. On January 10, 1997, the state superintendent approved the recommendations of the review panels and subgrant award forms and letters were sent to the 12 charter schools and 13 districts receiving planning grants.

5. In February 1997, the department employed a limited-term employee (LTE) to conduct a descriptive study of Wisconsin's charter schools using DPI's 5% administrative funds. This will result in a publication of approximately 50 pages which will be completed by August 1, 1997, and will be distributed free to all interested persons. The remainder of the $41,250 in 5% administrative funds is being used for printing of technical assistance materials, postage, program-related travel, and miscellaneous expenses for supplies and office equipment. The DPI program administrator attended conferences in Appleton and Milwaukee sponsored by the Wisconsin Charter School Association and provided update reports regarding program activities, pending legislative changes to the charter school law and the possibility of receiving supplemental funding sometime this spring.

6. During the winter of 1997, a charter school conference to be held on September 24-25 in Stevens Point, WI, was organized by the LTE noted above. On September 24, the 13 districts which received planning grants will make presentations regarding their planning projects and will provide a document describing those activities. On September 25, the 12 charter schools which received initial implementation grants will make presentations regarding their charter schools and the use of the federal funds and will provide a document describing those activities.

7. In May 1997, the department submitted a request to the U.S. Department of Education for a supplemental grant in the amount of $500,000 based on the high demand for subgrant funds experienced during the December 1996-January 1997 competition. On May 29, 1997, the DPI was informed that the additional $500,000 had been awarded to Wisconsin. Under provisions of the supplemental grant award, $190,000 was awarded in June 1997 to the 11 charter schools that had not received full funding of their initial implementation requests in January 1997.

8. A total of $285,000 of the supplemental grant will be used to support approximately 12 new charter school planning subgrant projects during the 1997-98 school year. Five regional information meetings have been scheduled between July 9-17, 1997, and an application deadline date of August 22 has been established. A letter was sent to the 426 school districts, 12 CESAs, and related agencies and organizations publicizing the new planning subgrant funds and competitive process. In addition, a special letter was sent to the 31 districts that did not receive planning subgrants in the previous competition encouraging them to apply again.

9. The following changes to Wisconsin's charter school law are now moving through the legislative process; it is expected they will be approved in final form in July 1997. These changes will make the law less restrictive and will stimulate additional charter school activity.

   a. The city of Milwaukee, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the Milwaukee Area Technical College will be authorized to establish charter schools. These will be the first entities other than district school boards authorized to grant charters and will provide the opportunity for creative new charter schools in Milwaukee. These charter schools will not be instrumentalities of the Milwaukee school system; funding will be provided by state aid deducted from the Milwaukee Public Schools.

   b. A statewide appeal process will be initiated. Up to this time, there has been no appeal process available to community groups whose petitions have been denied by the district school board. This new provision will increase the probability that additional charter schools will be established throughout the state.

c. Teacher support for new charter schools will not be required. Teacher support for the conversion of existing schools to charter schools will continue to be required.

d. The five-year maximum on charter school contracts granted by district school boards will be eliminated; contracts may be for any period of time agreed to by the parties involved.

## Project Status Summary

At this time, nine months into the first year of Wisconsin's federally funded charter school program, the department is extremely pleased with the progress that has been made. Federal funds have helped strengthen 12 of the 13 existing charter schools and have provided the assistance needed to fund 13 planning projects. The only frustration encountered is that the demand for resources is far greater than the funds available, especially in the area of planning grants. The May 1997 supplemental grant will help address this need to some extent as will the new funding to be received in October 1997. In addition, the legislative changes noted above will provide new opportunities and renewed enthusiasm to the program and stimulate the demand for additional federal and state support.

## Budget Information

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction retained 5% ($41,250) of the October 1996 $825,000 federal grant for program administration purposes and 5% ($25,000) of the May 1997 $500,000 supplemental grant for the same purposes for a total of $66,250 in program administrative account. The rate of expenditure will increase significantly, however, during the period July-October 1997 due to expenses associated with the September 24-25 conference, printing and distribution of the charter school descriptive study, and additional use of the LTE employee to assist with the ever-increasing workload as federal funds increase and Wisconsin's program continues to expand, especially in light of proposed legislative changes.

It is also likely that some administrative funds may be used to pay part of the salary and benefits of the department's charter school administrator. This has not been done to date, but a legislative request by the department to fund a .50 FTE position for charter school administration has not been successful and the increasing workload requires that more administrative time be given to the program. As of this date, it is not anticipated that any fund balance will remain at the end of the current grant period.

## October 1997 Grant Request

The receipt of a total of $1,325,000 in federal funds in Wisconsin during the current grant period caused enormous progress to be made in the state's charter school program this year. Twelve of the existing thirteen schools were strengthened by the federal funds. Thirteen of forty-four planning grant applications were funded in January 1997, and it is estimated that an additional twelve planning grants will be awarded from an unknown number of applications which will be submitted to the department by the August 22, 1997 deadline for the supplemental funds recently received.

The demand continues, as does the need for funding. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, by means of this report, requests that the October 1997 grant award be increased from the pre-approved amount of $825,000 to $1,325,000. This would provide the same level of funding during the second year of the project as Wisconsin received in the first year through the combination of the two grant awards. This level of funding would enable the department to meet the continuing demand from existing schools, but more importantly, to address the strong demand for planning subgrant funds which may result in the creation of additional charter schools.

Five percent (5%) of the $1,325,000, or $66,250, would be used by the department for program administration purposes. Fifty-two percent (52%), or $692,312, would be used to fund charter school planning grants throughout the state. Forty-three percent (43%), or $566,438, would be used to strengthen existing charter schools.

# Responsibilities of School Board, Petitioner, DPI, State Superintendent, and Charter School

Wisconsin's Charter School Law (s. 118.40) outlines the following responsibilities.

## School board

1. The school board may establish as many charter schools in the district as it wishes.
2. On its own initiative, the school board:
   a. may contract with individual or group to operate a charter school; and
   b. may grant a petition to convert all schools in the district if at least 50 percent of the district's teachers sign the petition and the school board provides alternative public school attendance arrangements for pupils who do not wish to attend or are not admitted to a charter school.
3. Upon receipt of a petition, the board
   a. shall hold a hearing on the petition within 30 days of receipt;
   b. shall consider level of employee and parental support; and
   c. may grant or deny a petition. A decision to deny a petition can be appealed to the state only by petitioners in the Milwaukee Public Schools.
4. The contract
   a. shall be with the person the petition names to operate the charter school;
   b. shall include all of the provisions specified in the petition;
   c. may include other provisions agreed to by the school board and petitioning parties;
   d may be for any term not to exceed five school years and may be renewed for one or more terms not exceeding five years; and
   e. shall specify amount the school board will pay the charter school during each year of the contract.
5. The school board may enter into agreements to establish multi-district charter schools as long as the charter schools are located in one of the participating districts.
6. The school board may not enter into a contract that would result in the conversion of a private school to a charter school, except for Milwaukee Public Schools.
7. The school board shall give preference in awarding contracts for operating charter schools to those that serve children at risk.
8. The school board may revoke the charter school contract if it finds that any of the following occurred:
   a. the charter school violated the contract;
   b. the pupils enrolled in the program failed to make sufficient progress toward attaining the educational goals under state law (s. 118.01);
   c. the charter school failed to comply with the generally accepted accounting standards of fiscal management; or
   d. the charter school violated the statute creating charter schools.
9. The school board may not require a pupil to attend a charter school without his or her approval, if the pupil is an adult, or the approval of the pupil's parents, if the pupil is a minor.
10. The school board shall distribute the school and school district performance report to parents of children in charter schools.
11. The school board shall administer the Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test to children enrolled in the charter school.
12. The school board shall administer examinations designed to measure pupil attainment of knowledge in fourth, eighth, and tenth grades to charter schools pupils. The board may not use results of these examinations to evaluate teacher performance, to discharge or formally discipline a teacher or as the reason for nonrenewal of a teacher's contract.

13. The school board shall ensure that the instructional staff of charter schools in the district hold DPI licenses or permits to teach.
14. The charter school is an instrumentality of the school district in which it is located and the district's board shall employ all personnel for the charter school, except in the Milwaukee Public Schools where this provision does not apply.

## Petitioner

1. The petitioner may petition the school board to establish a charter school.
2. The petitioner must file the petition with the school district clerk
3. The petition shall be signed by at least 10 percent of the teachers employed by the school district or by at least 50 percent of the teachers employed at one school in the district. If the petition proposes to convert all of the schools in the district to charter schools, it shall be signed by at least 50 percent of the district teachers.
4. The petition shall include all of the following:
   a. the name of the person seeking to establish the charter school;
   b. the name of the person who will be in charge of the charter school and the manner in which administrative services will be provided;
   c. a description of the school's educational program;
   d. methods the school will use to enable pupils to attain educational goals;
   e. method for measuring pupil progress in attaining educational goals;
   f. school's governance structure, including the method to ensure parental involvement;
   g. qualifications that must be met by the individuals to be employed by the school (the school district must employ instructors, who must hold DPI licenses or permits);
   h. procedures the school will follow to ensure health and safety of the pupils;
   i. means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that reflects the school district population;
   j. requirements for admission to the school;
   k. manner in which annual audits of the financial and programmatic operations of the school will be performed;
   l. procedures for disciplining pupils;
   m. public school alternatives for pupils who reside in the school district and do not wish to attend or are not admitted to the charter school;
   n. a description of school facilities and types and limits of liability insurance that the school will carry; and
   o. the effect of establishing the charter school on the liability of the school district.

## Department of Public Instruction

The DPI will review the appeal of denied petitions only from the Milwaukee Public School. The rulings will be made within 30 days and the decisions are final.

## State Superintendent

1. The state superintendent must be informed when a school district establishes a charter school and must be provided a description of the proposed charter school.
2. The state superintendent shall promulgate rules defining "instructional staff" for charter schools. (DPI has created a special charter school teaching permit.)

## Charter School

1. If the charter school replaces a public school in whole or in part, it shall give preference in admission to any pupil who resides within the attendance area or former attendance area of that public school
2. The charter school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and all other operations.
3. The charter school may not charge tuition.

4. The charter school shall not discriminate in admission or deny participation in any program or activity on the basis of a person's sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability.
5. The charter school is not required to meet any requirements of chs. 115 to 121 (school district statutes) except for:
   a. pupils included in district membership;
   b. licensure of instructional staff;
   c. administration of the Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test;
   d. administration of fourth-, eighth-, and tenth-grade state assessments; and
   e. participation in annual school/district performance report.
6. Depending on the terms of the contract with the school board, the charter school will
   a. provide for administrative services;
   b. provide an educational program;
   c. enable pupils to attain educational goals under state law (s. 118.01);
   d. measure pupil progress in attaining the educational goals under state law (s. 118.01);
   e. have a governance structure that ensures parental involvement;
   f. hire qualified individuals, subject to the following:
      • must be employed by the school district (except Milwaukee Public Schools) and
      • state law requiring instructional staff at the charter to hold a DPI license or permit;
   g. ensure the health and safety of the pupils;
   h. achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that reflects the school district population;
   i. provide for annual audits of the financial and programmatic operations to be performed;
   j. provide for public school alternatives for pupils who reside in the school district and who do not wish to attend or are not admitted to the charter school;
   k. provide for school facilities and liability insurance; and
   l. follow procedures specified in the contract for admission and discipline of pupils and other terms agreed to in the contract.

# Contacts for School Districts and Charter Schools

## Appleton Area

**District Administrator**
Thomas Scullen
P.O. Box 2019
Appleton, WI 54913-2019
(920) 832-6126

**Appleton Central Alternative School**
120 East Harris Street
Appleton, WI 54913
LuAnn Coenen
(920) 832-6136

## Beaver Dam

**District Administrator**
Richard Fitzpatrick
705 McKinley Street
Beaver Dam, WI 53916
(920) 885-7300

**Beaver Dam Charter School**
400 East Burnett Street
Beaver Dam, WI 53916
Don Smith
(920) 885-7423

## Deerfield

**District Administrator**
Edward Van Ravenstein
300 Simonson Boulevard
Deerfield, WI 53531-0288
(608) 764-8261

**Deerfield Alternative High School**
300 Simonson Boulevard
Deerfield, WI 53531-0288
Barb Noll
(608) 764-5431

## Eau Claire School District

**District Administrator**
Lee Hansen
500 Main Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701-3770
(715) 839-6071

**McKinley Charter School**
500 Main Street
Eau Claire, WI 54701-3770
Holly Hart
(715) 839-2831

## School District of La Crosse

**District Administrator**
Richard Swantz
807 East Avenue South
La Crosse, WI 54601
(608) 789-7628

**School of Technology and Arts (SOTA)**
1307 Hayes Street
La Crosse, WI 54603
Tarry Hall
(608) 789-7760

## Ladysmith-Hawkins School District

**District Administrator**
Douglas Walker
1700 Edgewood Avenue East
Ladysmith, WI 54848
(715) 532-5277

**Ladysmith Evening Alternative School**
1700 Edgewood Avenue East
Ladysmith, WI 54848
Debra Morrissey
(715) 532-5531

## Madison Metropolitan Schools

**District Administrator**
Cheryl Wilhoyte
545 West Dayton Street
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 266-6235

**Affiliated Alternatives**
15 South Brearly Street
Madison, WI 53703
Cal Stone
(608) 266-6006

**James C. Wright Middle School**
1717 Fish Hatchery Road
Madison, WI 53713
Rolland Willan
(608) 267-1144

## Middleton-Cross Plains Area Schools

**District Administrator**
Steve Koch
7106 South Avenue
Middleton, WI 53562
(608) 828-1600

**Middleton Alternative Senior High (M.A.S.H.)**
2417 Parmenter Street
Middleton, WI 53562
Jill Brandl
(608) 828-1620

## Milwaukee Public Schools

**District Administrator**
Alan Brown
P.O. Box 2181
Milwaukee, WI 53201-2181
(414) 475-8001

**Highland Community School**
2004 West Highland Boulevard
Milwaukee, WI 53233
Meribeth Pinkerton
(414) 342-1412

## Stevens Point Area School District

**District Administrator**
Emery Babcock
1900 Polk Street
Stevens Point, WI 54481
(715) 345-5444

**Teachers Educating, Advising, Mentoring Students (T.E.A.M.S.)**
1900 Polk Street
Stevens Point, WI 54481
Kendra Allen
(715) 345-7312

## Verona School District

**District Administrator**
Robert Gilpatrick
700 North Main Street
Verona, WI 53593
(608) 845-6451

**Core Knowledge Charter School**
5890 Lacy Road
Fitchburg, WI 53711
Christine Uelman
(608) 278-0755, ext. 143

**New Century School**
420 Church Street
Verona, WI 53593
June Coleman
(608) 845-2574

## Contacts for charter schools that started operating in the 1997-98 school year

### Kenosha Unified School District

**District Administrator**
Michael Johnson
P.O. Box 340
Kenosha, WI 53141
(414) 653-6320

**The Brompton School**
1011 Washington Road
Kenosha, WI 53140
Patricia Jones
(414) 652-1339

**Paideia Charter School Academy**
P.O. Box 0929
Kenosha, WI 53141-0929
Ellen Becker
(414) 554-8605

### School District of La Crosse

**District Administrator**
Richard Swantz
807 East Avenue South
La Crosse, WI 54601
(608) 789-7628

**School of Technology and Arts II (SOTA II)**
1900 Denton Avenue
La Crosse, WI 54601
Glen Jenkins
(608) 789-7670

### North Crawford School District

**District Administrator**
Brad Gillaspie
P.O. Box 68
Gays Mills, WI 54631
(608) 735-4318

**Kickapoo River Institute**
Route 2
Gays Mills, WI 54631
James Lewicki
(608) 476-2245